


SWEET BRIAR COLLEGE



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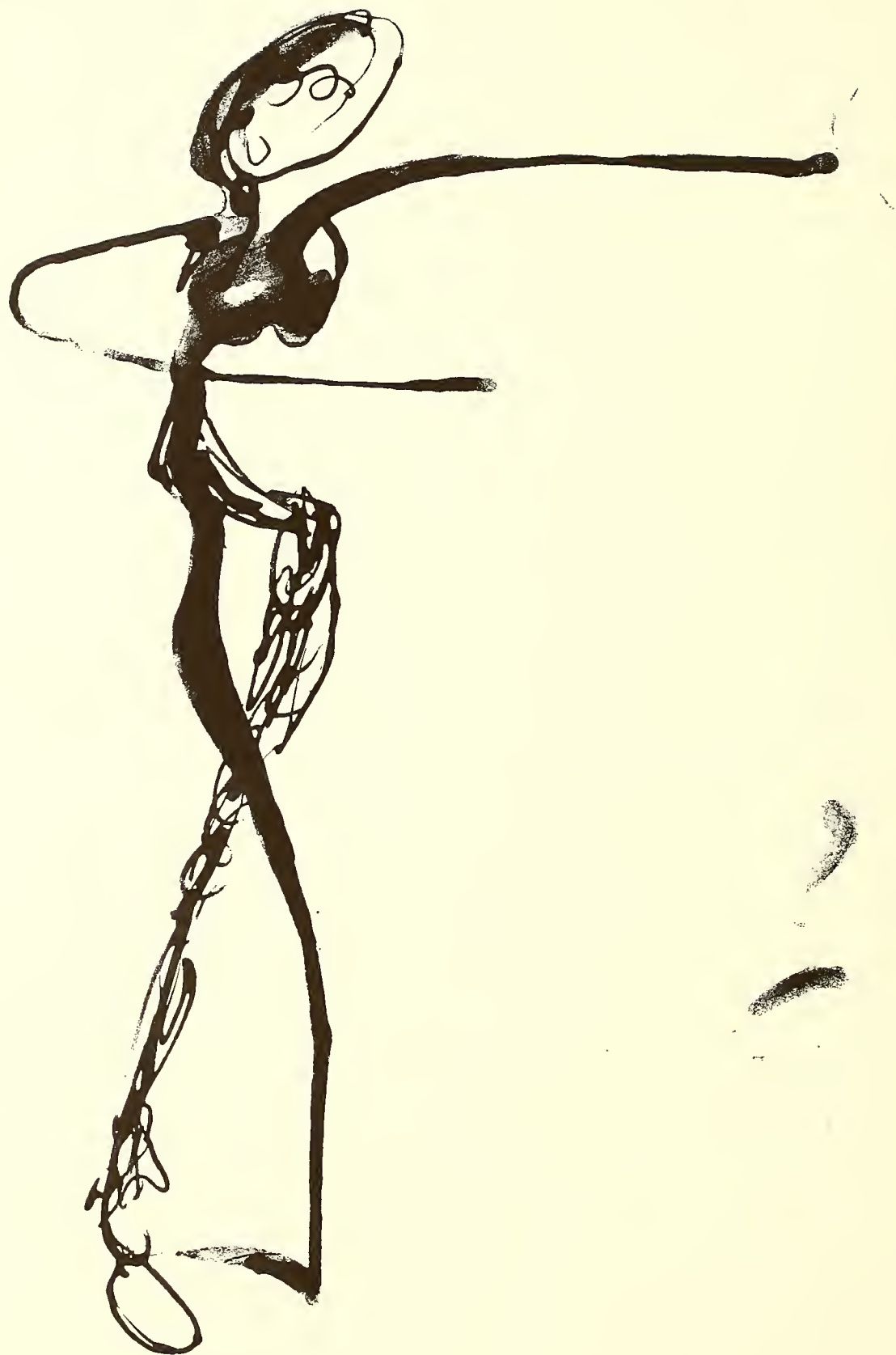


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Apollo and Daphne

[after the painting by Tiepolo]

Running, still running through a racing wind,
she hears the unhurried footsteps close behind;
Panting and labouring, stumbling as she goes,
Her hopeless flight is over, as she knows.

Her prayer for help rasps choking from her breast;
His arms enclose her and she is possessed;
But as she turns, the shriek of horror dies
And the god holds her with his golden eyes.

His mouth is smiling and his voice is kind —
Alas, along her flanks the woody rind
Spreads, and her arms are cased in stiffening leaves;
Her toes take root; her fingers sprout with leaves.

And now his lips, in turn, with horror gape;
Bitter remorse and grief accuse his rape.
He turns away, but still her voice he hears
From sobbing boughs that blind his eyes
with tears,

Not knowing that the last pang of her despair
was when she saw the bay leaves in his hair
And thought: I love, I love him — late, too late!
And through my senseless prayer, he shares
my fate.

A.D. Hope.

Sometimes in the quiet hours
You at the window
Me by the fire
I would wish for
Some clever bit of conversation
to bring you from wherever you were
back to me again.
Some little thing
that would make you turn around
and see me sitting on the rug
playing with a piece of wood
that wouldn't burn.
But then I was never very clever
and you were never
very far away.

I THINK I LIKE YOU A HELL OF A LOT

The sun is in my stomach
And I feel my fingers grow
To touch you
Glowing
With breathless song.

The song is the sea,
And the wind waves the gold
That streams out from the sky
And I
And you
Stand still
As we listen to
Shivers of splashing.

Pearlie

Today she has on a blue dress. From the road I see her walk to the rotten log chicken house that's a barn for her cow. She's fat and short and moves slow with a bucket hanging at her side. The road is rutty and dry. A layer of red clay dust hangs on everything growing beside the road, even her big mailbox that sags off its post. Her house used to be white. Now the paint is peeling off, and the boards are turning a dull gray.

The way out to the cow and her is snakey. High grass and beggarlice swish my legs. The blades hit like fangs. I suck in and keep walking. Not many people ever get snakebit.

I hear the sssshit of milk spurting out and the bing when it hits the bucket. Now I see Pearlie's square back as she squats on her stool. Spider webs hang from the ceiling, and years of chicken droppings earth the floor. A cow pie steams in one corner.

"Git that leg out the way."

She kicks at the hind leg closest to her, and the cow shifts its weight.

"Easy now."

Her dress is the tiny print of flour sack material. It's sleeveless, so the veiny white meat of her upper arms rolls out. Old woman fuzz shows from her armpits, and between her shoulder blades is a dark splotch. The air is still and hot. My head nearly touches the ceiling. I watch her fat fingers squeeze high on the teat and slide down with the milk bulge in front of her fist. Like a rat in a king snake the hump is pushed down until it ends in a thin, white line of milk. Green flies settle on the cow's rump. She swishes her dung brown tail.

"Hoo!t up here you."

"Hi, Pearlie."

The top two buttons are off her dress, so I see where the red V ends and her sagging bosoms begin. There are sweat beads on her chest and black necklaces of dirt in her wrinkled, fat neck.

"What you doin' up here this time of day?"

"Momma and daddy brought me by. They're going to Lottie and C. E.'s first."

The sides of her feet hang through the cut out places in her old maroon bedroom shoes, and just above her knees her hose knots show.

Pearlie's not really my grandmother. She's just my

step-grandmother. My daddy's mother died when he was real little, and his daddy married Pearlie. In an old brownish picture we have of daddy and all his brothers and sisters his real mother looks real distinguished except she's a little cross-eyed. I could never call Pearlie my grandmother. She's too fat and greasy looking, and I can't stand it when she spits her snuff juice into the coffee can she keeps next to her chair in the livingroom. Her teeth are brown, and there's always brown caught in the corners of her mouth.

She shakes the last drops of milk from the teats and wipes her wet hands on her apron.

"Bring that milk on to the house."

She picks up her stool and sets it against the wall. With a corner of her apron she wipes the sweat off her forehead.

The milk slooshes when I change hands. Some milk runs down the sides and beads on the dirt. The wood part of the handle is broken off, so the wire cuts into my hand. My fingers are turning white.

The cement feels cool and smooth to my feet. Pearlie had the porch poured when Uncle Stacy made the minnow ponds under the mimosa trees, but there ain't no minnows in them now.

Pearlie's kitchen is hot, too. It smells like ripe bananas and has two stoves. She likes to cook on the wood stove, but Aunt Florence got embarrassed because her mother cooked on a wood stove, so she bought her a secondhand electric one. Aunt Florence lives in Salisbury and hardly ever comes to visit her momma. I bet Pearlie's never been to her house. Inside the refrigerator is cold and wet. It feels good to stand here with the door open. Pearlie's at the back door.

"Have you got any cold biscuits?"

"Yonder's some on the table left over from yesterday."

I like to eat her biscuits. Momma always gets them in the can, so I only get homemade biscuits here. Every Sunday we eat at Pearlie's. Usually a bunch of my cousins come. The men always eat at the first table and then the women and then the children if they haven't already eaten in the kitchen. Pearlie stays in the kitchen nearly all day and sweats and complains. After everybody's eaten most of the women pitch in and wash the dishes. Soon as the men eat they go into the livingroom and sit

and smoke and talk. Sometimes one or two will go upstairs and sleep. After cooking Pearlie comes in and sits in her chair and fans with one of her Jesus fans. Everybody looks greasy and doesn't say much except Uncle Will who's old and skinny and religious. He has a whiny voice and isn't really one of the men. He has his room upstairs and lives with Pearlie all the time.

"Where's Will."

"He went up to High Falls to see that Mr. Orin Star who is preaching tonight. Didn't you see them pictures of him up at the station. People been talking about him a week now."

"Pearlie, you know who I saw when I was coming from the road?"

"What's that?"

"I said you know who I saw when I was coming over here?"

"Who?"

"Jack."

"I don't know no Jack round here."

"You know the nigger that worked for Uncle Stacy that time when he had all the hogs up here."

"It couldn't be him. He got took off to prison."

"It was too, because I remember how he walked and he had a big scar on his jaw."

"Look here. You sure it was Jack up there at the road?"

"I swear it was him. He was walking the way you do when you come from Gulf. It was before I got to the road to your house. I didn't think nothing much of it till just now."

"Don't you go out of this house."

"But I wanted to go to the pond. He probably ain't even there now."

"You know what he got took off for? It was for takin white girls like you to the woods and usin 'em like a man. He's a mean nigger. You better listen to what I'm saying. You better watch out for these niggers and not have nothing to do with them. You can't ever tell what they might do. They ain't like white folks. When they get in a corner they go wild, and don't think for a minute that everyone of them don't carry a knife. They do and they'll use it quick as a flash."

Go in yonder and lock the back door.

"Yes, mam."

"And lock the screendoor too."

"Pearlie, come here. Pearlie, he's out there. He's leaning against the barn and looking at the house."

"Where?"

"Over there. See. What do you think he's hangin' round here for?"

"Git away from that window. I bet that black joker got his hateful eyes filled with you this afternoon up at the road, and he ain't forgot it. That's why he's hangin' round."

"You go up and look in your Uncle Will's closet and get me that gun. He better just come snoopin' round here any closer. Go on now, and don't forget some shells out the box."

Pearlie pulled a chair to the window.

Uncle Will's room is small and smells like hair tonic. His closet has a front curtain like the material of Pearlie's dress. The gun is at the back. It feels cold against my

hand. The shells are red and lying straight in a little box on the shelf.

"Here it is and the shells."

"You give me one and hold the rest."

"What do you think he's going to do to us?"

"He ain't goin' to do nothin', cause I'll shoot his black head off if he gets any closer."

"Why don't you sit down?"

"Go get me a glass of water."

Still peeping between the curtains she eases down to the chair. The fat of her legs hangs over the sides.

"Here."

She gulps half the water and sets the glass on the floor. Sweat's popping out on her face.

I feel his eyes staring at me. He knows only me and Pearlie is here, 'cause Will's at preaching.

"Would he do it to us, Pearlie. What he did to those girls in the woods. Do you think he would do that to us?"

"He would if he got the chance. They love white women better than their own kind."

"He's moving through the tall grass, Pearlie. He's coming toward the house. Pearlie, he's coming to get us."

"Shut up that talk."

Pearlie's hand shoves me down. I can still see him out the window, sliding like a snake in the high grass.

"Holt up there you."

Under Pearlie's arms the sweat rolls. Blue veins stick out on her forehead.

"Jack Adams, you holt up there or I'll shoot. I'll shoot you dead as a doornail, Jack Adams."

He eases zig-zagged to the edge of the yard. Pearlie's breathing is all I hear. Her face is red and more veins stick out.

"Now Miz Pearlie, you wouldn't do nothing like that, would you?"

"Jack Adams you broke out of prison. I know you did."

"Oh, no Miz Pearlie they let me out for being so good."

"Ain't none of you Adamses no count. You broke out, Jack Adams."

He steps forward and spits. I see him smile and squench his eyes. He has a mean smile.

"I'll shoot."

"He's on the cement now and laughing and scratching himself."

Pearlie's mumbling.

"Shoot him, Pearlie. He's going to get us like the girls in the woods, Pearlie."

Her face is red. Her neck is red. She's panting like a dog. The sweat's rolling off.

Jack laughs louder and throws his head back.

"Pearlie, he's going to get us. Pearlie, shoot."

I feel her wet body press against me. Her eyes are shiny and white. Her face is white.

"Pearlie!"

She falls back from the window and thuds on the slick floor. One of her old bosoms hangs out her dress. Her chest is heaving and some spit runs from her mouth.

"Pearlie! Get up Pearlie. He's on the steps. Pearlie he's going to get us."

All I can hear is me breathing.

"Oh Pearlie."

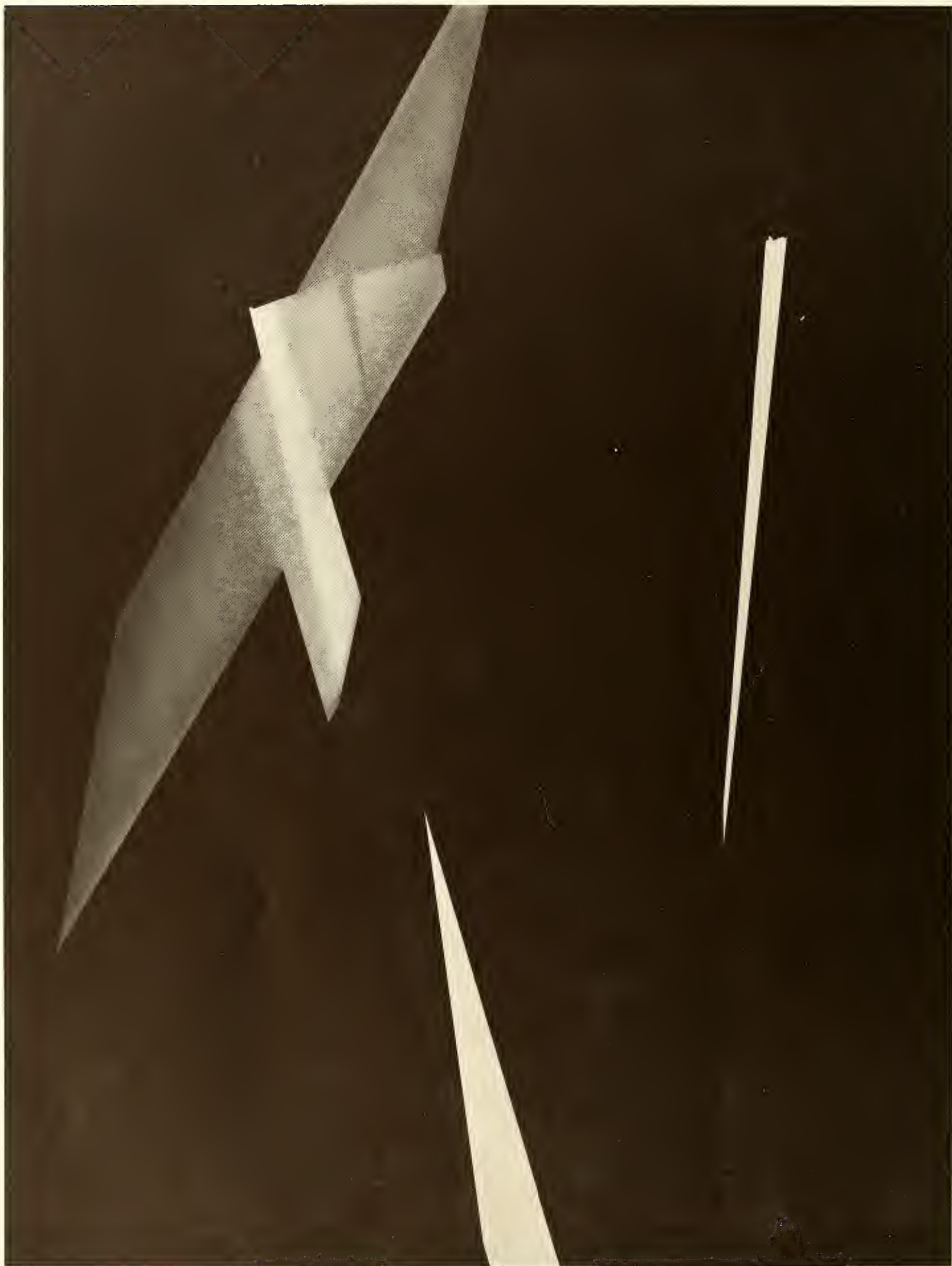
When those canvas-backs glided over that swamp
and those cattails wavered in the wind
 that pushed the rotting canoe upon the slit
 i thought of you
when without warning that shot echoed
 through the swamp's silence
and that duck cried in horror
 and fell fluttering
 struggling in that water
and all was quiet again
it was then
 i realized
 how quickly something can end.

EDGARTOWN

The stirring sound of shifting
ships in early morning water
and the dull thud of wooden hulls
against the dock
reminds me *gently*
to pull on my slicker
and run to the bow
before the yawning sun blinks
its glint on the sea
For to miss the start of sun-rise
is like finishing a sandcastle
some stranger left half built.

Split me from side to side just like the Red Sea that time
when I always remember maybe when I was in bed next to her
while she read from the one with the pictures but there
wasn't a picture for that story so I could always leave
it up to my head and have this neat picture of a big rolling
lake of Strawberry Jam that parted like Somebody had run a
knife through the middle and then all those Egyptians whom I
had all in armor and on horses came after but halfway through
it got all turned into water and sometimes I felt sorry for
the Egyptians but I always felt sorry for the horses but then
you can poke me with a stick like I'm a dead fish and even
pretend if you want and I'll only be kind of oozy and my
stomach will kind of bounce out slowly when you stop poking
cause I'm kind of like that sometimes I know and it's not much
fun to look into the eyes of a dead fi
but when I'm all parted I hope it will be a clean cut like
the Strawberry Jam cause it's so hard right now with a sort
of vacillation between the Red Sea congealed and the Red Sea
liquid so I would probably either drown him or the Egyptians
but I'd (probably never be lucky enough to drown myself):
I don't know though, it might just be harder if I really
knew what he wanted . . .

enough said. Do You Ever Wonder When You're Cutting Your
Morning Toast with Jelly and All Whether The Little Folks
That Live In the Bread Are Writing A Book About You That
Will Last For Thousands Of Years Until (you finish your
toast)
and they don't even know you





JUNKYARDS OF SOULS

The days go by
 with "good morning"
 "good evening"
 and "good night"
a baby cries
 a child plays
 a youth studies
 with tomorrow in mind
 he marries
gets a job and works all day to support the wife and kids' cos he loves them;
soon he works himself to death and ends up in that great big job in the sky
And there they stand—the bereaved
 bereaved for what?
for the lack of a support, a daddy, a normal home. . . .
 but they never really knew
 him
What were his dreams ? his hopes ? his goals ? his values ? his thoughts ?
 They don't grieve the man—
 they didn't know him—they didn't
have time.
They knew the machine and it no longer works.
So they take it to the junkyard and momentarily grieve
 its passing.
Then they find they can work as well or find someone else that can.
 and they forget him:
 just like they forgot
the first car that was junked
 the old washing machine
 the 'lectric train
and battery-powered walkie talkie winkie blinkie crying doll
 and
 all the other
 junk
 they've
 cast
 aside.
Well,
 it's ended
 the battle's through
 for the unknown soldier
He joins the ranks and ranks
 of unknown men—
 among whom stand czars, kings,
presidents, poets, authors, painters, sculptors, doctors, nurses, garbagemen,
mommies, daddies, brothers, sisters, babies, and morticians
 and they all sit and watch the living
live for themselves
 and laugh

WAITING









Black women!
Black women!

Patented heads, curly heads,
nappy heads, greasy heads,

Black legs, Black legs,
Black necks, Black hips,
Black thighs
Black curves

From whose mother-making loins
came her

Black Man!

Black Man
Black Man
Black love-maker, Black strength, Black beauty-ful

Black magic

Searching, searching
caught between Black thigh mountains
riding, riding
Higher, higher
Plowing, yearning to be one

Black Soul

Black minds
Black mindscommunicating
in musical Issac Hayes language
in revolutionary Panther language
in intellectual bougeoise language
in 4-letter-on-the-corner language
in scag's pinch language
in pot's sweet high language

SURROUNDED
by a thousand extras in
Honky Rhetorical
BRAINWASH!!!!!!
"Dirty motha fuckas!"

Yeah
But dig:

Black circles
Black circles

Dramatic circles
under James Baldwin's eyes
under Leroi Jones eyes



MEREDITH

7

Repetious circles

under Uncle Tom's eyes

under Aunt Thomasina's eyes

Vivious circles

under hungry, jaundous eyes

under ghetto slave eyes

under nigger-kill-nigger eyes

under your eyes

under my eyes

Spaced out circles

under good feeling scag eyes

under cocaine coated eyes

under west Indies smoke eyes

under pill-popped-out eyes

Death future circles

under Edlridge Cleaver's eyes

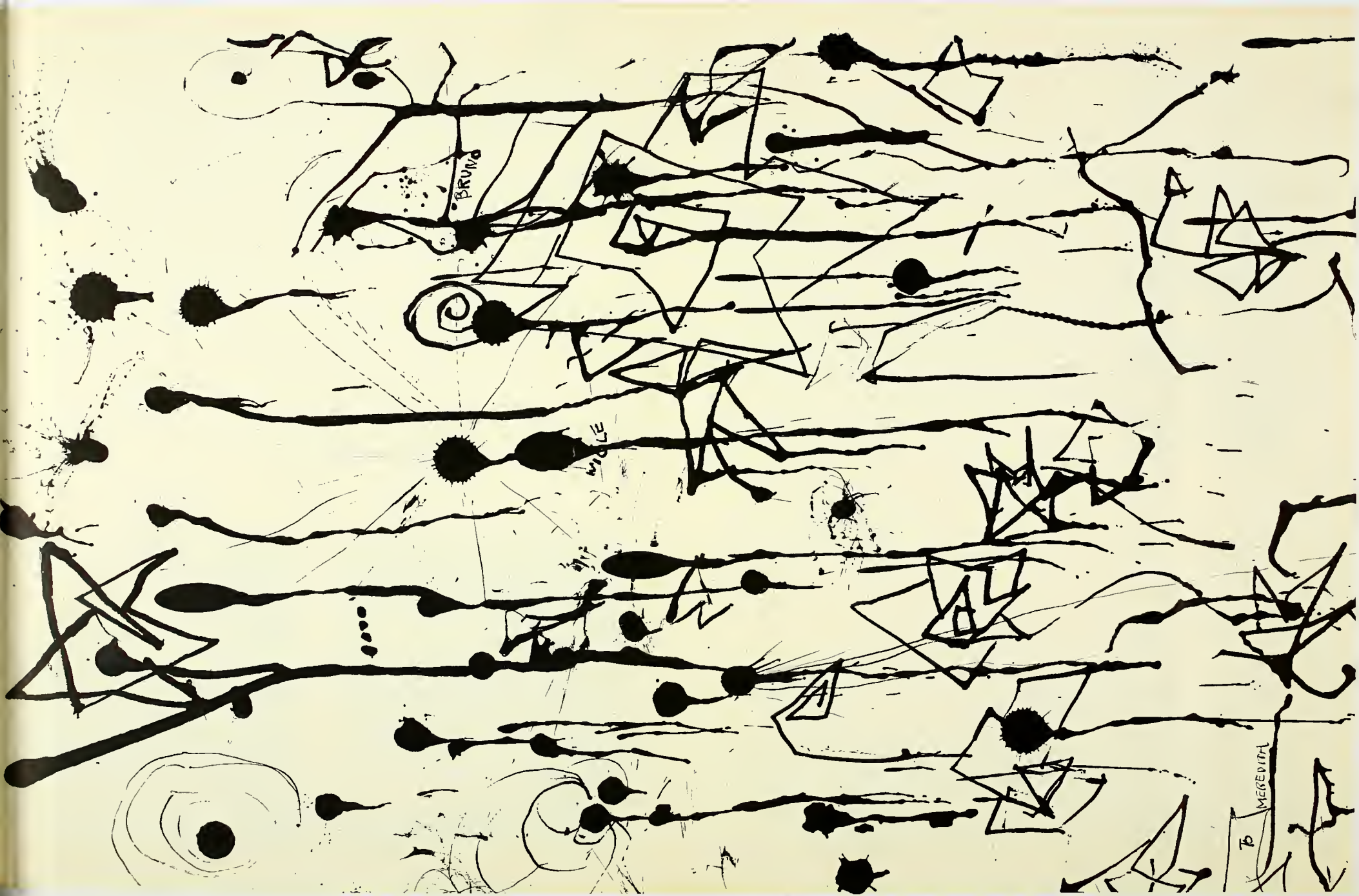
under Bobby Seale's eyes

under Connecticut 9 eyes

under Black Amerika eyes

under your eyes

And mine



BRUNO

37

TO MEREDITH

The Courtship of Mother and Daddy

My mother moved to Arlington when she was twelve. Granddaddy Johnston, upset over the growing population of papists on Tenth Street, had decided to solve the problem of raising his daughters by moving closer to the Scottish community. But the Depression came, and when he learned more about the people who lived down the street, he could-not afford to move again. All he could do was instill in his girls a deep distrust of alcohol, swearing, and cards.

Grandad Brown made his fortune early. As an under-graduate at I.U. he bootlegged beer for the Sigma Chi's and Sigma Nu's, sang telegrams for the Delta Delta Delta's, waited tables in Harrison Hall, lent money at ten percent interest, and collected empty whiskey bottles to sell to his "friends" up north. Grandad was the son of a Baptist minister. By the year nineteen twenty-nine he was bribing the city police with free uncarbonated soda water, sponsoring a Saturday night crap game in his basement, selling boxes to the government, and raising two sons.

"Mother, I've put the dishes in the cabinet, now mayn't I go outside to play?"

"Have you seen your Father?"

"No, Mother."

"Then it is alright, just be sure not to speak to any stranger or play with any strange animal."

"Yes, Mother." The grave-faced, little girl in her

denim dress and white pinafore walked over to the front door, opened it softly, and shut it silently. She walked down the front path, then ran.

"Will you look at that!"

"A new girl!"

"You think we can scare her?"

"She's awfully skinny . . ."

"Let's go," the third boy hissed, so they jumped to their feet and ran across the street to catch up with Aunt Jeanie.

"Ching chong Chinaman sittin' on a fence, tryin' to make a dollar out of fifteen cents. Big black Ned, bet ya made of lead!" the boys yelled, circling around her. She stopped and twisted her head to watch them. "Cat got yer tongue and you ain't no fun, Cat got yer tongue . . ."

She laughed and they stopped chanting.

"Ching chong Chinaman sitting on a fence, trying to make a dollar out of fifteen cents. Ching chong Chinaman eats dead rats, chews them up like ginger snaps. Ching chong Chinaman picks his lice, sells them to your mothers as QUaker's puff rice! I can sing as well as you can." She grinned at them, but they only stared back. "I'm Jeanie Johnston, and you mustn't speak to me when my father is around."

"Why not?"

"He's Scots." The boys just stared at her. "What's the matter, Cat got your tongues?"

"Are you a girl?"

"Well, I'm not a silly old boy!" she replied, walking on down the street.

"Do you wrestle?"

"Sometimes. Mostly depends."

"On what?"

"Whether or not you lend me your knickers. I'm not to play if I muss my everydayes."

"Do you chew tar?"

"When it is fresh."

"Can you shoot dice?"

"I can do everything."

"Do you play with dolls?"

She hesitated. "Well, when my sister Mary does. Just to please Father, you know."

"Is she just like you?"

"No, she's better. She can ride a bike."

"My brother Billy has a bike," Uncle Jack replied with pride. "I bet your sister can't ride it."

"I bet she can!"

And that was how my father almost met my mother. Aunt Jean dared Uncle Jack to dare his brother to meet my mother after dark, riding his bike. But Mother was afraid of the dark, and well, Daddy had homework to do.

It was nineteen thirty-nine and my father was playing golf with Slewfoot. They were at the ninth hole, the one bordering the sidewalk on Church Street, when my mother walked by. Daddy gave up his game.

"Mary, Mary Johnston!" Mother walked on by. "Mary, hey wait a moment!" Daddy ran after her, jiggling clubs, two hundred pounds and all. "Mary, where have you been my whole life?"

"Bill Brown," Mother stopped and frowned at him. "Go away!"

"Aw, come on, Mary. You never say a decent thing to me!"

"Bill Brown, I never see you around."

"What have you been doing?"

"Idiot, I've been here all along." And she started to walk away from him.

"Hey wait, Mary. I haven't finished my game."

"So go finish your game! If you don't hurry you'll forfeit and lose your money."

"Do you realize that's the longest sentence I've ever heard you say?"

"Go away! You need the exercise!"

"It comes from studying too long," he replied, taking her black portfolio.

"What comes?"

"The fat. What's in here?"

"Pictures."

"May I see them?" he asked, pulling at the strings on the side.

"For God's sake! Leave those alone!" she cried, grabbing her portfolio.

"Bet you don't know what you just said."

"Bet I've learned worse things than that. Go away, Bill Brown."

"What's you doing tonight?"

"Nothing that involves you."

"Come on, Mary. I can get tickets to the Circle or the Indiana Roof."

"No."

"Can I walk you home?"

"I can't say no, seeing that my house is a block away."

"Are you doing anything Saturday night?"

"Yes."

"Tom Worthlessness?"

"Worthton! And who told you about him?"

"Your sister Jean was over last night shooting Pool with Jack. What are you doing Saturday?"

"Washing my hair. Now if you'll excuse me, I've got to go."

"May I call you?"

"You may, but I doubt if you can talk to me."

"What's wrong?"

"You're just obnoxious!" and she slammed the front door.

Three weeks later, having gotten the same response every Friday and Saturday night, Daddy showed up at her door.

"Good evening, Mrs. Johnston."

"Good evening, William."

"DeWitt, ma'm. Bill is just a nickname."

"I'm sorry. Won't you come in?"

"Thank-you very much." Grandmother Johnston lead Daddy into the livingroom and pointed to the couch. He sat down.

"What can I do for you, DeWitt?"

"I have a date with your daughter tonight."

"Jean? I think she is already over at your house."

"Yes, she is. I've got a date with Mary."

"You do? That's funny, she didn't tell me about it . . ."

"Well, I hope she hasn't forgotten about it!" and he laughed heartily.

"I'll go upstairs and see if she is ready; last time I saw her she was in a smock. She paints, you know."

Grandmother climbed the stairs to Mother's room.

"Mary, your date is downstairs waiting."

"What, Mother?" she replied with a mumble, biting the end of a paint brush.

"Your date is here."

"You must mean Jean's date. I don't have one."

"Mary, it's your date Bill Brown! And just look at you with all of that mess. You are a disgrace to me."

"Mother," she said, hands on her hips, "I don't have a date with Bill Brown. Just tell him to go away."

"Mary Johnston, I am ashamed of you. I know he's no good looker, but if you made a date with him, you must keep it."

"Mother, I don't have a date with him," and she frowned at her canvass.

"Mary, if you are not down there in ten minutes, I'll have to speak to your father!"

"Mother . . ." But Grandmother had already left.

"DeWitt, she'll be a little time in coming. She had a last minute idea, and couldn't wait to paint it down. I'm so sorry."

"Oh it's quite alright, Mrs. Johnston. I think I understand what drives her. Jack is the same way, you know. Actually, painting and drawing are the only things that can keep his mind occupied."

"Yes . . . if you'll excuse me, DeWitt, I think I have to do some gardening. Call me when Mary comes down."

"Yes, Ma'm!"

"Yes . . ." and she walked back to the kitchen.

And so Daddy kept showing up every Friday night, and as Mother kept insisting that she didn't have a date with him, Grandmother got worried. She got so worried that she called on Pastor McWhiinty. He set things straight; he simply pointed out to Grandmother Mother's devotion to Grandfather Johnston, and Grandfather's dislike for the "Liquored up, downtown gambler" who was the father of Bill Brown. Pastor McWhiinty prided himself on his understanding of psychology.

One Friday night Daddy didn't show up. Mother, having gotten used to his coming, was dressed up with no place to go. So she waited. And waited. And waited. He didn't come. Around one o'clock Aunt Jean came home, and as she shared a bedroom with Mother, and as Mother was still sitting up on her bed waiting for Daddy to show up, she noticed that all was not well.

"Mary? You still up?"

"Yes," she replied angrily.

"Something wrong, Mary?"

"Where were you tonight?"

"At the Brown's, as usual."

"Really?" she asked, speaking through her teeth.

"They had a swell party. Why are you all dressed up?"

"Shit!"

"MARY!"

"Shit, shit, shit, shit!"

"Mary, what if Father hears you?"

"I don't care what Father hears. I can say worse things than that!"

"Well, what's you so angry at?"

"That God damned conceited Bastard! After all those weeks of putting up with his inanities, after all of those talks Mother has been giving me, after all the times I was civil to him, he does *this* to me!"

"You didn't have a date with him tonight, did you?"

"No."

"Well, that's good. He was with that redheaded nurse he used to go out with before he started to date you."

"What redheaded nurse?"

"Oh, I think he sleeps with her."

"JEAN!"

"Well, Jack thinks so, and since you don't care about

Billy, I didn't think it mattered that I tell you."

"I don't care."

"Hey, why are you so dressed up?"

"Because I felt like it! And I knew that if I didn't get dressed, he'd show up."

"Oh. Well, goodnight."

And Daddy stayed away. Not forever, you understand, just long enough for Mother's temper to cool down, and just long enough for him to get tired of the redheaded nurse. In other words, he showed up again on a Saturday night two weeks later. And then a week after that, and a week after that. Then it got so that Daddy took Mother to the movies on Friday, and came to dinner on Saturday. Being a Scottish cook, Grandmother and her dinners started to whittle down his waistline. And as Grandfather Johnston was now speaking to him, he wasn't quite as obnoxious as he was before. In fact, Mother began to like him. Just a little though, you understand.

"Mary, how about going for a walk?"

"Bill it's almost nine o'clock."

"Well, I don't think I'd like to go walking with you in the day time. Might scare off any kids who happened along."

"Bill Brown, you can be so obnoxious!"

"Come on then," he said, opening the front door. "We can see if there are any midnight golfers out on the course."

"It is a lovely night, and I don't think that it would hurt to go out for a little while . . ."

"Mary, have you ever thought about what you would do after you get out of Art School?"

"I guess I'll have to teach. To pay for my paints, you know."

"Yes, but what are you going to do? Just spend your days teaching elementary design, and your nights painting pictures?"

"I suppose so."

"Didn't you ever think of getting married or having a house full of kids?"

"Every girl thinks of that! Of course I would."

"Then you don't think it is wrong for a girl to have a career and a marriage?"

"Bill, I think it's the most natural thing in the world!"

"Mary, I'm going to speak frankly to you."

"Yes, Bill?"

"Mary, will you keep this in a safe place until I've paid for it?" In his hand he held a small box. Mother opened it and saw the diamond engagement ring and wedding band. "You'll take care of it for me until I need it, won't you?" he asked earnestly.

"Who is it for, DeWitt?"

"I can't tell you that, Mary. Not until I can afford to give it to her."

"Oh. I'll keep it in my jewelry box. No one will find it."

"Thanks, Mary, you're the swellest girl a guy ever met!" and he kissed her on the cheek.

Daddy kept showing up Saturday nights for dinner. But he didn't come around on Fridays anymore; Mother suspected that the redheaded nurse worked a Saturday shift. Aunt Jean didn't know; Uncle Jack had gotten tired of being beaten in poker, craps, and pool, and had started to date my future Aunt Janet, a well-endowed blond. So Mother kept wondering about Friday nights, and Daddy, for some mysterious reason, kept getting thinner and thinner.

"... and further more, dear Lord, we ask that Thee grant thy blessings on those who are not so fortunate as to believe in your commandments and in your forgiving grace. We commend to you our children, and ask that their tables always be as bountiful as the one that is set before us . . ." Grandfather's blessing droned on, and Daddy looked speculatively at the boiled salmon. "... watch over us forever, Amen."

"Bill," asked Grandmother. "What have you been doing with yourself these days?"

"Ma'm?"

"DeWitt," Grandfather's voice boomed out. "She wants to know what you have been doing."

"Just the same as usual. Physiology at nine, neurology at eleven. After lunch is Anatomy lab, and sometimes it's organic chemistry. The same old thing."

"Well, obviously it's not just the same old thing."

"I beg your pardon sir? Jeanie, pass the potatoes, please."

"Every Saturday night you come and fill yourself to brimming, and every Saturday you come back five pounds thinner. What are you doing?"

"Bleeding, sir," he replied with respect.

"Bill!" hissed Mother, kicking him under the table. "Not while he's eating."

"Quiet, Mary. I want to know what DeWitt has been

doing. Obviously he's not losing any weight over you!"

"Father."

"Be quiet, girl. Children should be seen and not heard."

"Father, I'm twenty-one."

"Maybe so, but you are still living at home. Now, DeWitt, what have you been doing on Friday nights for the last two months?"

"Recuperating, sir."

"Father . . ."

"Quiet, Mary. Recuperating from what?"

"I've been giving blood every Friday afternoon, after Chem lab."

"For the War Cause?"

"No, sir, for the money."

"Do you mean to tell me that you don't think the provocations to the British Isles, even to the English, were not sufficient to give your blood for free . . ."

"But of course, sir!"

"Young man, before we pursue this subject, I have to ask you one thing."

"Yes sir?" Daddy asked nervously.

"What are your intentions concerning my daughter Mary?"

"FATHER" Mother had jumped out of her seat.

"But that's why I am giving blood every week!" Daddy shouted over the commotion.

"And what do you mean by that?"

"I've got to pay for the ring I gave her."

"The ring?" Grandfather turned to Mother and frowned. "Mary, where is this ring?"

"I . . . well, he didn't . . ." Mother sat back down.

"Well, go get it, girl! Don't just sit there!"

"I . . . yes, Father," she replied weakly.

And that's how Father got engaged. Not married, of course. That is a different story. I mean after Daddy started to build the cabin, she was still refusing to set a date, and it wasn't until he went fishing with Slewfoot . . .

MESSAGE FROM THE RISING MOON

Down the lake from where we are staying
The sun sets behind the great dunes,
 coloring the water.
But already I look for the moon.
I watch it rise in the south for several nights
And each night it grows until
Quite full, it rises above birches, poplars, oaks, and pines
And shines through the window of my son's room.
In its light as he lay sleeping,
I realized that one or both of us were at a difficult age
But that good or better times would come.
Now the moon is dwindling and growing orange with age
 and stays low in the east where the trees hide it
But I take heart from what it has revealed.

Crying Gray

Mist muzzles hungry traffic,
Condenses its speed to worming

Past steaming Cambridge walks
And clusters of fuzzy face talk

Below worn out buildings.
And fog licks the trace of hot tears

On the summer scorched windows
That , even clean, won't divulge

Hollow heads keeping time with
Machine clicks, machine tricks.

To Air Olympia —
Stone corpse hunching in pocket of

Gray and sound tormenting.
Aisle , slanting and spaced for one,

Suspended seats and feet uphold.
In cushions round as orange

Night black suits with head and hands
clutch public words which measure life.

FROM CHINATOWN TO NOB HILL

Crates of chickens, live and stinking,
Scream their passions from the sidewalk
“Death is coming.
“We will hang by our legs in restaurant windows.”
While junk shops flourish, selling Chinese souls.

Fleeing cheques and checkers I climbed cement hills,
Past Chinese groceries and Chinese laundries,
Past streaming smells of incense,
Past dog shit on the sidewalk.
And even the summer sun is cold,
Clogged and dying from exhaust.



LOVE

His voice is love making
Making love to my mind
 to my body
 to my life
 to all that is me

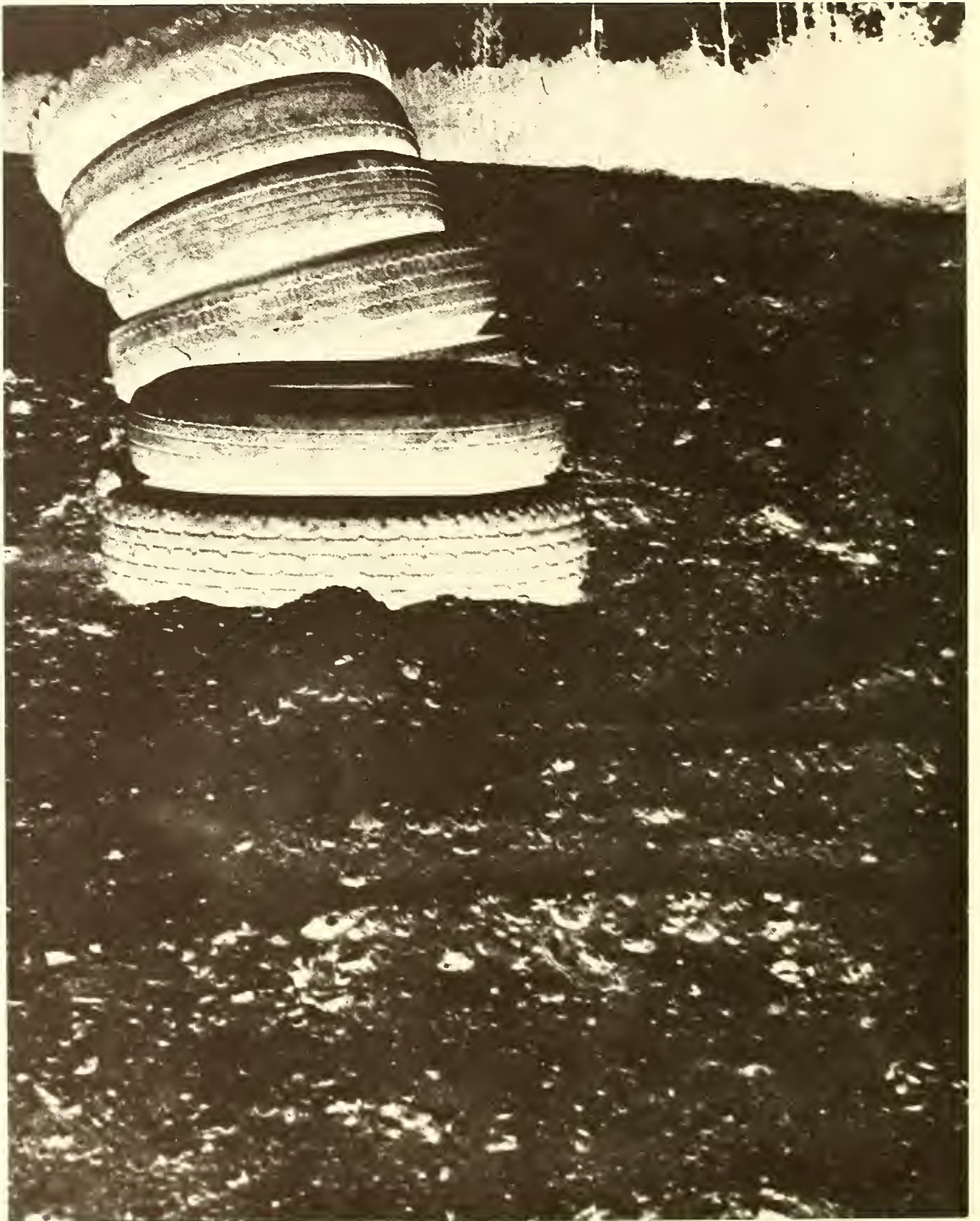
His voice is love making
Making love to my ideas
Gently freeing them of false phrophets
and praising my true saints
as I give birth
to the child of our communion: Understanding

I am thinking of the war and of Jim
 who is burning his draft card

Beside a narrow trail
Blue-green and dank
Jungle heavy air.
Thorns and pine needles
Bed the fierce.
Napalmed men face up
Licked by the lion
Whose tail strikes
A whip across the conscious

Mind.

LIGHT AND MOTION













PHOTOGRAMS

A photogram is created by exposing light sensitive paper to an enlarger. Designs are created by using different objects on the paper. If, for example, one places a leaf on the paper, the areas of the paper which are completely exposed to light will be black, and those areas in which the light is totally cut off will be white. Either by moving the objects or by using objects which light can partially penetrate one can create gray areas.

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THE BRAMBLER

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SPLIT ENDS

Last year I got in to split ends. You know, when your hair gets funny branches at the ends and makes your head look fuzzy.

Split ends is why a lot of girls get their hair cut. Not much, just enough to make it seem smooth and even. But that's a drag when you figure it takes a month to grow what you cut off in ten minutes.

It first happened at about two in the morning, when I was studying for a biology hourly. I was all slumped over, wondering what was the difference between a purine and a pyrimidine (and how was I gonna learn what I couldn't even read in six hours), when I noticed a Y shaped hair sitting on a diagram of an amino acid. I picked it up and very carefully tried to separate the two parts — just like Popeye or an Arabian knight with a freshly sharpened machete.

At first it was sorta like how DNA splits before it replicates itself. But then one of the hairs broke off, so I found another Y, only this one was a pitch fork with three prongs. The first piece of hair I pulled just peeled off in a tight little curl, but I separated the other two almost to my scalp. I started to unwind the little curl and got to thinking about my grandmother's poodle-type hairdo, and how she must be pretty lonely. She's only about a six hour drive from here, but free weekends I usually hang around school enjoying doing nothing. Then I started thinking about the nothing I enjoyed the last weekend and how maybe I ought to do something the next weekend.

Well, I barely passed the bio exam and I didn't visit Grandma last year, but I got into the split ends some more. It's really a good deal, basically. I mean, it doesn't give you cancer or make loud noises when people are trying to study and you can take it anywhere with you. Like to class meetings or statistics.

Or like the time I couldn't figure out how to tell this

guy I liked him but just didn't dig seeing him every weekend. He asked me what was wrong and I just got into my split ends. I didn't have to tell him how much I did like him and how much I didn't, he got the message. Split ends is a nice reaction when your mother finds your birth control pills in your room, too.

I was working on a paper for social psyc., when this big mother hair with fourteen branches (no kidding, I counted 'em) caught my eye. It must've taken me twenty minutes to separate all the pieces. The radio was on and I was listening to Richard Nixon defiling the words Freedom and Equality. I like those words too, but not the way he uses them. But, I wondered if maybe we had something in common . . .

I moved on to another hair. It wasn't split but had a light spot on it that I couldn't figure out, even when I held it real close up to my eye. Freedom and equality — how do you get them both at once? I mean, socialism is the only way to give people a fair chance in life, but what happens to the individuality when you just live to preserve the society? Thought about it some more and didn't come up with an answer, but I did find out what the white thing on my hair was all about. You see, it's a place where the hair is broken but hasn't fallen off yet. You just give it a little tug and the end comes off. If you pull on enough of those broken hairs you don't have any more split ends, and then what do you do?

Well, I figured it's pretty silly the way we're always shampooing (used to be people didn't even have baths but once a week) and brushing our hair to get split ends, if it turns out you can just pull them off. I mean if you can't daydream and play with split ends it's kind of scary because you might have to start deciding things.

Maybe I ought to get into hang nails.



The night before my birthday
When you came over
We went upstairs
To hear Simon and Garfunkel
(My Valentine present)
You tickled me *all* night
And I fell off the couch
On to the typewriter
The keys still stick
I was so happy
Then

THUMPER

For those of you who don't know who Thumper is, he is the older brother of the five Williams girls, and now, with his longer hair, my parents say he looks a lot like me.

Of course, he doesn't really look like me—that's just my parents way of making him want to get his hair cut—but my four younger sisters do like me, and in fact, people say it's really amazing how we five can all look so much the same, and at times even sound the same. Thumper, however, is the only boy in our family, and therefore can't possibly resemble any of us girls. We're glad of it too, because none of us are particularly fond of our older brother. He practices his wrestling holds on us; he makes us fix him sandwiches at night; he won't tell us if the phone is for us; and he even teases our friends until they're as scared of him as we are. When we try to tease him back, though, he pounds us on the back, or at least tries to, but sometimes we're able to get away.

We try to be nice to him. As I said, we sneak down to the kitchen at night and fix him sandwiches when we're really supposed to be in bed, and we let him twist our arms and legs until they almost break so he can practice his wrestling holds. But he still gets mad at us, just the same, and either hides something of ours, or pounds us right there on the spot.

One day, my sister, Dede, and I were up in his room on the third floor, and were trying to steal some of his chemicals out of his old chemistry set when we heard him coming up the stairs. Of course we were trapped—there was no escape except down the stairs—so my younger sister panicked right away and completely blew any chance we had of hiding from him. She started screaming bloody murder, and ran for the stairs. My brother was so surprised, he let her get away. Then, when I decided to do the same thing, it didn't work. He nailed me right up against the wall.

"Don't pound me, don't pound me!" I pleaded right away.

"What were you doing up in my room?" he demanded while I watched his fist get ready to start pounding me on the back.

"Nothing, nothing, I swear! I heard Dede going through

your stuff, so I came up to tell her to get out, or else she'd get in a lot of trouble from you. I swear to it! She was just looking for some old chemicals, I guess. She wasn't messing anything up, but I told her to get out, just the same, or else I was going to tell on her. That's all, really, I swear. Don't pound me, I'm on your side!"

"Yeah, well why would she want my chemicals? You're the only one with a chemistry set!"

I started screaming, anticipating the pound, and then kicked him in the leg as he hit me once between the shoulders. Still screaming, I broke loose from my trapped corner on the landing, flew down the stairs, and ran and locked myself in the bathroom just in time.

I collapsed on the floor, trying to catch my breath and waiting for my heart to calm down. He was out there, I knew it. He would try to be really quiet and pretend he had gone away, but I knew he was out there waiting for me.

"Thumper," I began in a teasing voice, "I know you're out there. I'm not coming out, though. I can stay in here all afternoon if I have to. I think I'll just take a nap here, and then, when I wake up, maybe I'll take a nice long hot shower. So if you hear me singing later on, I'm probably in the shower."

There was still only silence on the other side of the door, but I knew better. "Thumper," I began again, "if you let me out, though, and promise not to beat me up, I'll let you use some of my chemicals—if you want."

He still said nothing, and I was just about ready to unlock the door and peek out, when I heard the dog's collar jingling.

"You think I'm pretty dumb," I began triumphantly. "You think I don't know you're out there. Well, you're wrong. You're the dumb one for letting Red stay around and give you away. I can hear her out there, and I know she's with you. Thumper, you might as well give up, I know you're out there, and I'm going to stay in here 'till Mom gets home."

He finally broke down and started talking. "Here, Red, you want the other eye off this doll? I see you already ate the first one. Just a minute, though, and I'll give

you an arm to chew on as soon as I rip it off."

"Thumper!" I screamed, "you'd better not have my Raggedy Ann doll or you're really going to get it! I'm not kidding; I'll tell Mom when she gets home."

"What made you think you could go up to my room?"

"I can go up there if I want! You go into mine all the time, and you always take my stuff."

"Yeah, like what? What do I have of yours?"

"Well, I can't think of anything right now, but I know you take a lot of my things, so don't lie."

"I wouldn't want anything of yours. And you'd better leave my chemicals alone. There's a lot of them that you don't know anything about, and besides, you're too dumb to use them anyway. Come on, Red, let's go get a knife to cut off the head of this doll."

He was gone then. I heard him go down stairs, and I heard the dog follow him. The screen door slammed a few minutes later, and I knew he was the one who went outside.

I unlocked the door and slowly opened it. Nobody was around. Mom was still gone taking the cleaning lady home, and except for Dede, who was still hiding somewhere, all my other sisters were with my mother. I went to my room and looked straight at my bed. The doll was gone. Yes, my most oldest and most favorite doll that I'd ever had! I sat down on the bed and started crying.

"My poor doll! He took my Raggedy Ann doll—the one that Daddy gave me when I got my tonsils out. It's gone, I know it's gone. He's ripped it apart, and the dog's chewed up the eyes. I'll never see it again!"

Of course I really knew that I'd see my doll again. Thumper only hides our things, he doesn't wreck them like he says he is while we're locked in the bathroom. But I still cried about it, anyway, and even remembered to violently throw my head onto my pillow, and continued sobbing there until I got the hick-ups. When I finally got up, the pillow case was really wet, but by this time I had finally calmed down enough to remember to smooth out the covers so my mother wouldn't know that I had been lying on my bedspread again.

He was the worst brother anyone could ever have, I told myself. And after looking around the room for a few minutes to see if the doll was really there somewhere after all, I decided to go up to his room again, and steal as many of his old chemicals as I wanted.

Now I had just gotten my chemistry set a few weeks before, and even though it was a really small one in comparison to Thumper's, my mother worried about me using it, and made me promise not to play with it while she or Dad weren't in the house. Well, today I didn't care. I was mad at all of them, and sick and tired of being picked on while Thumper got away with everything. So, I went up to his room and got five different jars of his best sounding chemicals, and then went down the basement into the laundry room where I had my little lab set up.

I lit my candle right away, and even though I knew Mom would yell if she found out I'd done that while she was gone, I didn't care. Like I said, I was pretty fed up, and then, while I was looking through my manual to see if they had any experiments listed which had some of

Thumper's chemicals in them. I heard Dede yelling for me at the top of the stairs.

"I'm down here," I yelled back.

She came down the stairs and through the door.

"Dede, look what I've got." I forgot that I was supposed to be mad at her for ditching out on me when we'd gotten caught by Thumper, so I told her about how I'd sneaked up to his room and taken his chemicals. She wanted to be my assistant right away, and was so excited that I was going to let her help that she didn't even worry about doing it while my mother was gone.

"Okay look," I explained. "You can hold the test tube over the candle like this, and I'll start mixing stuff."

So I started mixing, and Dede held the tube for me while I poured the chemicals into it. Nothing happened much; there was a little smoke, and the stuff started smelling after a while, but that was all. I got pretty disgusted with the whole thing, and Dede was getting bored too. Her arm was getting tired from holding it in one place for so long, so I decided to look for just one more thing to throw into it before we gave up. One of the jars had a clear liquid in it that smelled like nail polish remover, so I poured some of that into the test tube.

Well, you should have been there! All of a sudden flames just leaped up inside that old test tube, and Dede was so surprised, she dropped it. All the stuff spilled all over the table and even into the bottle which the chemical was in. Tiny flames were just everywhere, and Dede was so excited, she knocked down one of my father's socks from off the clothes line, and that started smelling and burning too.

"Go get Thumper!" I screamed. So she tore out of there and up the stairs, yelling for him at the top of her lungs.

Meanwhile I blew out the candle, and tried to blow out the other flames too, but it didn't work—they just grew larger. My father's sock was smoking and burning in parts, so I picked it up and threw it on the cement floor, and started stepping on it. The other stuff was really smelling something awful now, and it was burning the table at the same time.

Dede must have found Thumper right away, and both of them came pounding down the stairs before I even had the fire in my father's sock completely smashed out.

"Thumper, what should we do?"

"You dumb idiot! What is this—my Acetone!"

"Should I call the fire department?" Dede kept screaming. "I know how, our teacher made us learn."

"Where's the Sodium Acetate?" Thumper demanded as he started knocking through my bottles.

"I don't know, what's that?" I started crying again 'cause everything really looked in a bad mess, and the tiny flames on the table were still going like crazy and the table top was all black.

"Thumper, where are you going?"

"Don't put any water on it," he yelled as he ran out of the room and up the stairs.

Dede was gone too, and I stood there staring at the flames and crying. I still kept stomping on my father's burnt sock even though it wasn't on fire anymore.

Next, I heard Thumper coming down the stairs from the third floor, and it sounded like he was taking them at least three at a time. He ran into the laundry room with a bottle of his chemicals in his hand. He got the lid off as he was coming through the door, and he began sprinkling the white powdery stuff on top of the flames. Amazingly, the fire quickly died down as he did this, and in no time at all, there was nothing left burning. It still smelt to high heaven, though, and as I stopped crying and moved over to the window to open it, I heard the sound of approaching sirens.

"Thumper, listen!" All the fear from before came right back in my throat. "Do you think they're for us?"

Thumper just stared at me, and then right at the same time we both yelled out, "Dede!"

"I'll go find her," I choked out, and then ran up the stairs.

The sirens were on our street, and Holy Toledo! As I looked out a window, two fire trucks pulled up in front of our house. Neighborhood kids were running like crazy down the street, and firemen were already connecting up a hose.

Dede was by the front door, white as a ghost. "I did it; I did it," she kept saying over and over.

I didn't have time to yell at her 'cause a fireman with an axe was at our front door. "Where is it?" he demanded.

I gulped, "Down the basement," and pointed in the direction of the back hallway where the stairs were.

He went flying through the house, and I was going to follow, but two more firemen came rushing through and pushed me aside.

Dede was excited now, and she ran outside to talk to all the kids. I decided to go down to the basement, but then stopped, halfway down the stairs, as I heard the firemen giving Thumper one of the worst bawling outs I'd ever heard.

"How old are you? Fourteen or fifteen? A boy your size should know better than to fool around with a chemistry set. Your little sister knows more than you—she can at least call the operator and get help when she needs it. You're lucky you didn't do any worse damage than this. Where are your parents?"

"They're . . . they're not home," Thumper barely whispered.

I had to get down there and help him. But as I entered the laundry room, all I needed was one look to know I should have stayed upstairs. Thumper's face was the reddest I'd ever seen it, and his eyes were wide and kind of watery.

"Your parents not home? Well, who's in charge here?"

We both looked at each other, and Thumper managed to get his voice working. "I'm in charge, I think."

Well, you certainly don't act in charge. Here you are, suppose to be looking out for your little sisters, and you

go and do something as crazy as this. What kind of an example are you for these young kids? I'm going to make sure your parents hear about this, believe me, I am."

The other firemen left, but that mean old looking one kept right on yelling at Thumper. Oh God, I was so scared! All I could do was just look at my poor brother, and all he could do was look right back at me.

"Well answer me, you did start the fire down here, didn't you?"

Oh, I was crying so bad now, and I couldn't stop. All I could do was bite my fingers. Any minute now, that horrible man was going to know I'd done it, and I was going to die. I knew I was.

"What's a matter? Who did start this fire if you didn't?"

Thumper cleared his throat, and I knew it was coming. "Yes, yes sir," he began as he still kept looking at me, "it was my fault, I . . . um . . . made a mistake." He swallowed hard, then went on and explained how he'd mixed the wrong chemicals, but he'd known right away how to put it out. He said something about Dede thinking she had to call the fire department, but I wasn't really listening anymore, I'd been saved.

Somehow my mother got down there in the laundry room too, and she was trying to be calm about the whole thing while she talked to the fireman. I didn't hear much of what they said, I didn't care anymore. My fingers were still in my mouth, but I'd managed to stop crying. Everyone was leaving, so I left with them.

Well, my Dad came home from work right after the trucks left. I knew we were going to get it then. Dede and I both locked ourselves in the bathroom while my Mom told him all about it, and we invited Thumper to hide in there with us, but he wouldn't talk to us.

After a while, they called all three of us down stairs, and made us tell them everything. I told the whole truth, too, 'cause I sure wasn't in any shape to try to think differently. In the end, Thumper was made some sort of hero for thinking so quickly, and knowing how to put out the fire. Dede was called, "Good Deed Dede," for telling the operator to get the fire department, and she wasn't even blamed for ruining my Dad's good sock.

There's no point in going into what they called me; it wasn't very nice. I was blamed for everything. My father locked up my chemistry set, and I never did get it back.

I remembered that Thumper still had my doll somewhere, but I was too scared to ask him for it. I guess if I'd complained to my mom, though, she would have made him give it back, but it really didn't seem that important anymore. Besides, I think I kind of liked Thumper. He still kept practicing his wrestling holds on me, and I still had to make him sandwiches at night, but heck, that really wasn't so bad after all.

—BOBO RYAN

I made up a list of the things I once feared,
Then burned it, and now they have all disappeared!

— GALE HULL

Seeing The Trees

Premeditated Rage
(The deadliest of passions)
Twisting reason into crazy, jumbled,
Upsidedownedness.
Revealing non-facts seen in shattered glass
Reflecting angered ugliness.
Converting body heat to
Words who lose
Their meaning on the page—
Who when received are clotted cold.
To kill a mockingbird—
Oh, God, to take a living form and
Drain it.
Gutless and unable to grab hold of anything
Except the sweaty, stinking fishbowl walls—
Surroundings of a junky,
Bloated,
Deadfish
World.
And then it's done.
The ebbing blood returns the life it took
And slowly, surely,
The forest reappears.



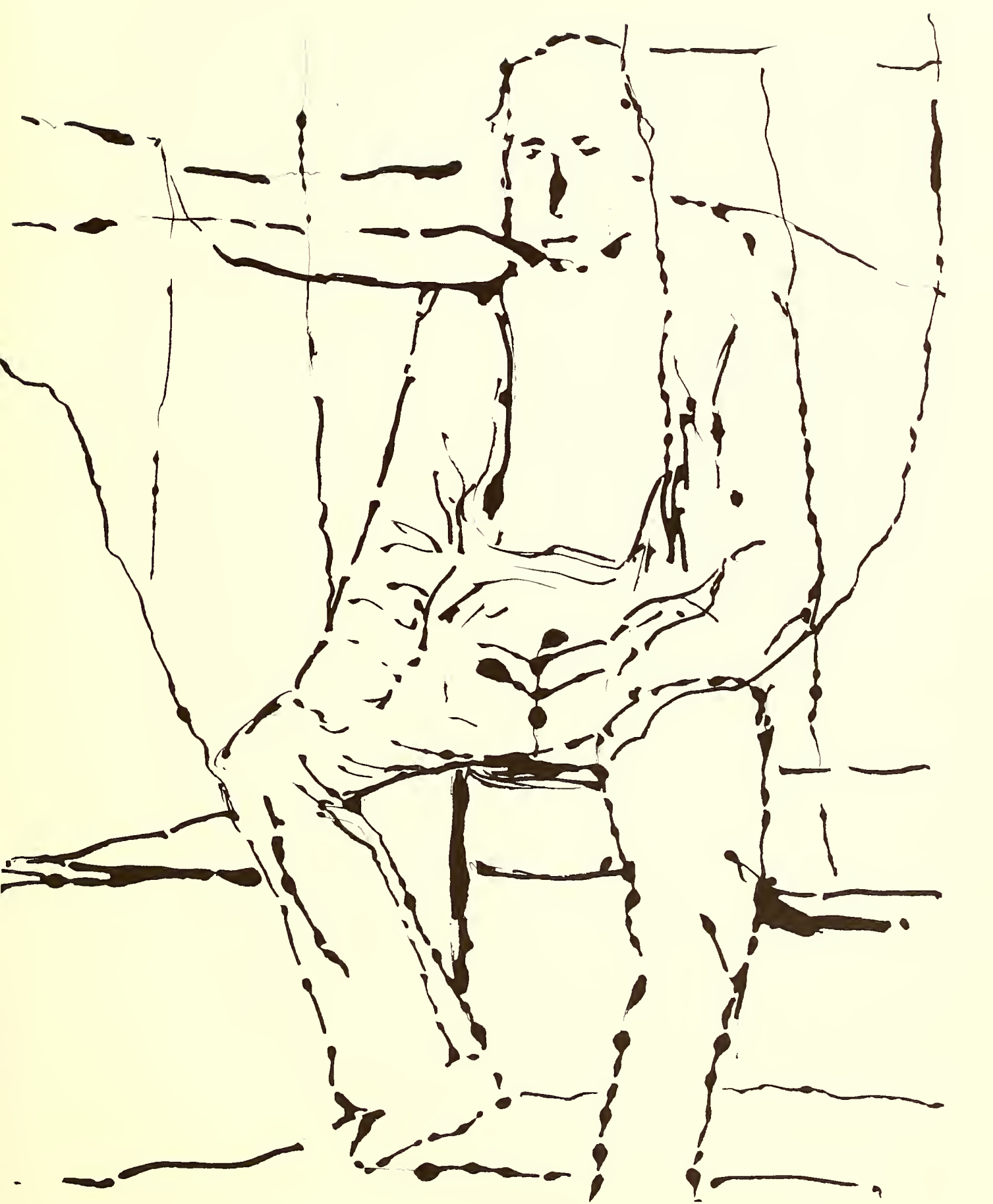
With a wail
Like the knife of Fontana
She split the black skin of night
Only to crumble in a heap
And weep for the lips of that wound.

— PAMOLU OLDHAM



LACKING AS MUCH VENN AS ZEN
OR
AN ODE TO RIGHT AND LEFT ANGLES

How strange it is to find
An axiom held through time
That curved lines and those straight
Measure attitudes separate
For who does not compare
The straight arrow, the square
Against the circle and the groove
Yet all are lines, *mere* lines, tis proved.



DEATH AT ALTAMONT

He stood, a tall thin shadow-figure engulfed in a beam of white light. He hung, balanced there for a moment as his shadow flickered outwards from the light and spread from the flat surface of the stage into the grey monstrous audience. As if he was trying to seek out and brush each dark face with the darker magic of his thin form, he rocked and slowly gyrated forwards towards the multi-headed monster, and backwards into the overhead brilliance of the one white light. The hush, the breathing, hardly audible sigh of a captivated audience was rising somewhere beyond in the back of the crowd and was spreading like a rush of wind until it reached forward, bathing the mountain-side assembly in common expectation. The sigh subsided the hush returned and the thin form crept softly out of the white light towards the end of the stage. Caressing the mike with long passionless fingers, he snaked his legs around the steel base, rocking it gently as if it were the slim form of a woman. The expectation, muffled beneath the hush, was breaking and a bubble of frenzy formed above the faceless heads. Now was the moment, the frenzy was rising, the foreplay was over . . .

"I am the black man"

The crowd sighed at the release of the words . . .

"I'm from the shadow land"

Heads were beginning to move forward together, pushing into the already crowded periphery of the platform . . .

"I want your mind, I want your heart"

Faces were beginning to become distinct as the white light assaulted the darkness, fragmenting the dim monster into individual entities. Yet the faces soon lost their distinctness and pushed together in common eagerness as the thin figure chanted above them, and as if from one mouth a sigh was forming, lifting from below, deep within the stomachs of the crowd.

"I've come from the depths,

I've come from the shadows, from the inner most world
I have come, come for, you"

"Yes" the sigh issued forth from the heads, a sigh of consent, of adoration; a submission of self was in the sigh, and the thin dark form breathed it in, drank in the given power of the monster-crowd.

"I've come for you, and you will follow,

will follow, yes, you will follow me"

"Yes" signed the slowly rotating grey, faceless monster, and from its nose a sweet smoke curled up darkening and clouding the flashing eyes.

"I'm no woman's son, no child's father,

I was born from the shadows, released from the vapors
And I've come, for, you"

"Yes" and the dark mass with the now clouding, drooping eyes rose and fell, breathing in the sweet smoke of its nostrils. But beyond, in the darkest outskirts of the crowd, like a tail curling, a silent group broke away from the swaying mass and walked towards the side of the platform. With a force of their own, a force somehow in contrast to the gyrating, grey mass and the thin performer, the tail made its way through the heads and through the sweet musty fog and stood at the edge of the wooden platform. They stood very still, aloof from the spastic, hypnotized monster-body and watched the shadow figure as it flickered in the white pencil beam of light.

"I am the black man"

"I'm from the shadow land"

And the thin form turned and slid towards the side of the stage as if he felt the detached force of the group that was staring so silently at him. His small deep eyes embedded in hair gleamed at them challengingly and he grinned at their silence.

"I want your mind . . .

I want your heart"

Drums rumbled from somewhere behind the white light, and the monster crowd, as if kicked by the vibrations, began to stretch restlessly . . .

"I've come from the depths,

I've come from the shadows"

And the shadow was now bending over the silent staring tail, bending with hips forward and boots backward and hair falling, reaching downward away from the eyes which glistened upwards at the pale, velvet night sky.

"I've come from the depths, I've come from the shadows,
from the inner most world, I have come"

And the hips began pulling backwards and pushing forwards and the hair began waving in pointed knots, but the eyes remained motionless staring, glaring at the sky.

I was born from the shadows"

And the gasp bubbled and broke in a soft road, a roar of acceptance, a roar of admiration, a roar of desire, and the monster crowd stretched and stamped together. Together except for the small group at the platform's side which balanced motionlessly, staring into the dark jeering eyes of the shadow man. And then, as if some message had been transmitted from those flashing eyes and the thin, snake-like form, the group began to turn away from the stage and, like a tail disembodied from the monster body, it began to move toward the grey crowd.

"I am the black man

I'm from the shadow land"

"Yes" sighed the crowd "yes, yes"

And the thin shadow figure rose in height, becoming more indistinct against the white light, but the eyes still flashed and the teeth glistened in the rays of the bright light. Yet something else now glinted and reflected the radiance of the light, something flashed from the edge of the crowd, like a raindrop of brilliance in the grey mass. The now moving tail was again curling, this time away from the stage, and darts of light fell from the exposed teeth, the tail was smiling. The light, as if tired of its concentration on the shadow-man, played on the teeth and on the moist eyes of the small group; flashes of brilliance lit their faces and dropped to shine off of the long, hard teeth of steel that they held in their hands. The monster crowd, rocking and hissing smoke, saw the dance of light on the steel and the multitude of heads pulled together in recoil.

"I want your mind . . ." breathed the shadow man

I want your heart"

"No, no" shrieked the monster, and its body fragmented into motion.

"Yes" sighed the tail, now formed into a V-shape of darkness.

"I've come from the depths,

I've come from the shadows, from the inner most world,
I have come, come . . ."

"No" shrieked the crowd and it shattered into pieces of fear.

"I have come for you"

"Yes" sighed the monster-crowd rising now, called by the echoing rumble of the drums. It rose and fell in united ecstasy, watching the twitching form on the stage; but the small group, the tail, remained motionless, gaping at the glistening teeth of the thin shadow which now had straightened and was standing above the writhing crowd.

"I'm in union

I'm in communion

I'm in union"

The monster reached out its many hands, trying to physically grasp the union, and the smoke curled slowly upwards from its nostrils into the velvet night.

"I'm in union"

"Yes" it murmured

"I'm in communion"

"Yes" it gasped

"I'm in union

I'm in communion

with,

you"

"Yes, yes" and the monster's hands moved forward, grasping, clutching, trying to capture the thin shadow and to pluck it from its white light and digest it within the dark folds of its monster stomachs.

"I'm the shadow man"

I'm no woman's son

No child's father

"Yes" sighed the rapidly curling tail.

"come for you" and the thin wire-like form hung backwards, awaiting the hush of approval, and instead heard the broken bubble of fear.

"No" screamed the limp-haired straightened shadow, now diminished in the strong white light.

"No" screamed the broken monster, and one of its many heads stared up in horror at the glinting, sparkling steel poised above it.

"Yes, yes" sighed the gleaming eyes behind the steel.

And the dark, smoky night air was ripped by a scream and the velvet, night earth was stained by a small stream of oozing, red blood.

— ANITA CLARENDON

I ran today away
But I came back after having seen the distance.

— ANNE WIGLESWORTH



Through the wire fence, higher than my arms reached up,
I saw mongoloids jumping into the perfect blue water
of the city pool.
They plopped in like belly-busting frogs,
Shrieking and awkward.
Thrashing legs and arms brought them to air.
Their flat, thick heads with hair slick to the skin
glistened in the afternoon sun.

— PAMOLU OLDHAM



Lament For Dr. Faustus

Faustus wanted all the answers.
Mephistophilis compiled.
He Taught him all there was to know
Almost before the blood had dried.

Just as pelting rains will flood
The friendly seeming summer stream
The thrilling things that Faustus learned
Turned life into a flooded dream.

As his overflowing mind subsided,
There was no water to be found.
The many things which Faustus learned
Had gone with him beneath the ground.

The honest quest for truth and knowledge
Had only led to foolish pride,
He was no longer ignorant
But what was left for him to buy?

The rain was gone which fed the stream,
The sky was void of any storm—
No wind to keep his mind in motion,
No fire to keep his spirit warm.

If brain and soul are one together
Seeking solace from the skies,
Then lightening can't be the thunder's answer
Or heaven's meaning surely dies.

A Riddle for Gollum

(in T. R. R. Tolkein's
The Hobbit)

It looks like a whirlpool
 yet it does not whirl,
It breathes
 yet it has no breath,
It is always with you
 and without it you could never be.
What is it?

Belly Button



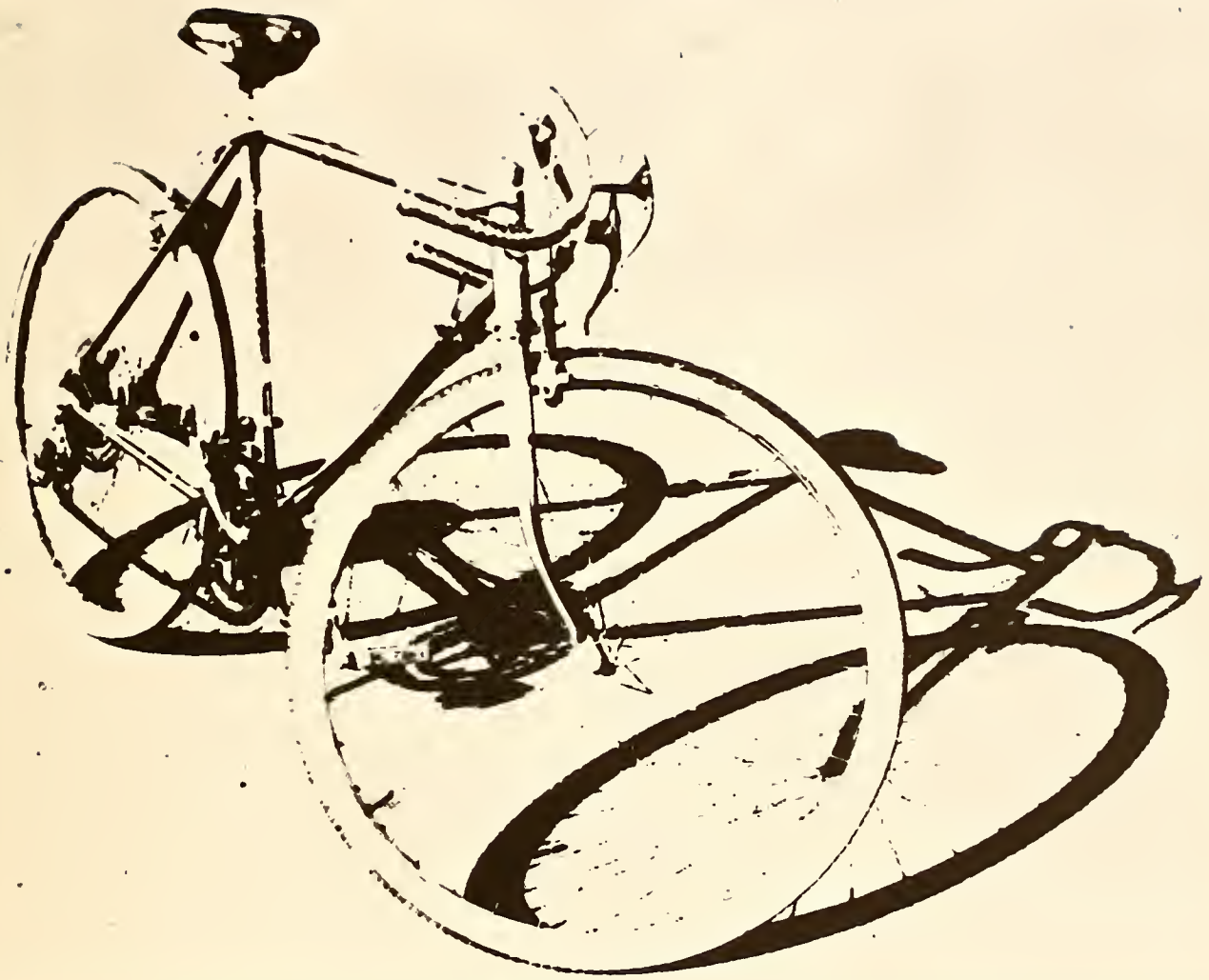
God drooled
Sticky, sweet rain.

— PAMOLU OLDHAM

For the old woman I saw outside the gates

For you the shelter of the cave or plank walls
is denied
outcast of this desolate space where wolves
roam at night and the debris heaps
smoke in the day
Nothing but bare stone and dust and
smouldering dumps
thrown away — scrapped — rotted down
searching through the rubbish to find something
marketable

— LIBBY WANN



A Complete Transaction

Hurry World,
complete your transacting.
Give the babe his milk,
the begger his bread,
the corn the sunshine,
and the bird its worm.

You have done all this before,
World,
before I ever was.
And I am waiting
for you to do again
all this that is routine.

And then when you are done,
World,
look at me and transact
words I've never dared to speak,
thoughts it always hurts to think.
Make it so routine
that I'll not be afraid
ever again.

I'll not be young
nor unenlightened;
I shall be before I ever was.
For you will resurrect me
from routine,
from tomorrow.

I shall know your secrets,
World,
and I shall be free.



As I ran away,
mostly for attention,
from the tennis courts
to the playground,
I almost chickened out
because a car of loud
someones who might have been
male stopped right near me;
that was why I stopped at the baby swings
instead of going on down to the big swings
where I had wanted to.
And also, the big swings were Taken
by I don't know who and didn't know then
so I was crowded into a cage that was a swing
and I swang
with excitement
wondering just who would get out of the car
that had pulled up right in front of me.
Two couples: fat buxom girls in banlon shells,
Tarzanic boys quick to make nasal joke
to make their women laugh,
to win favor.
All of a sudden there was the Big Dipper
I looked up. For a long time and let my hair
blow back in my face. Something smelled like garbage.
Courage had increased itself to me;
I decided it was time to move to the Higher Swings.
To blow and blow and blow and damply:
Hair in my face. It smelled like garbage here, too.
Sleeveless and chilly and burning and cool inside.
Again the Big Dipper for a long time,
Recalling to mind how much the Park
had always been attached to my growing-up
had always been attached to my Growing-Up
I smiled and felt brisk.
like playing after a snowstorm.
The two pairs of paired people
Danced and giggled between the night and the swings and
me.
I didn't mind. I was glad.
one pair had a radio chocked full of country-music.
I didn't mind. I was glad.
The knights still made jokes to their damsels fair.
The ladies laughed demurely and generously
and lit their own cigarettes.

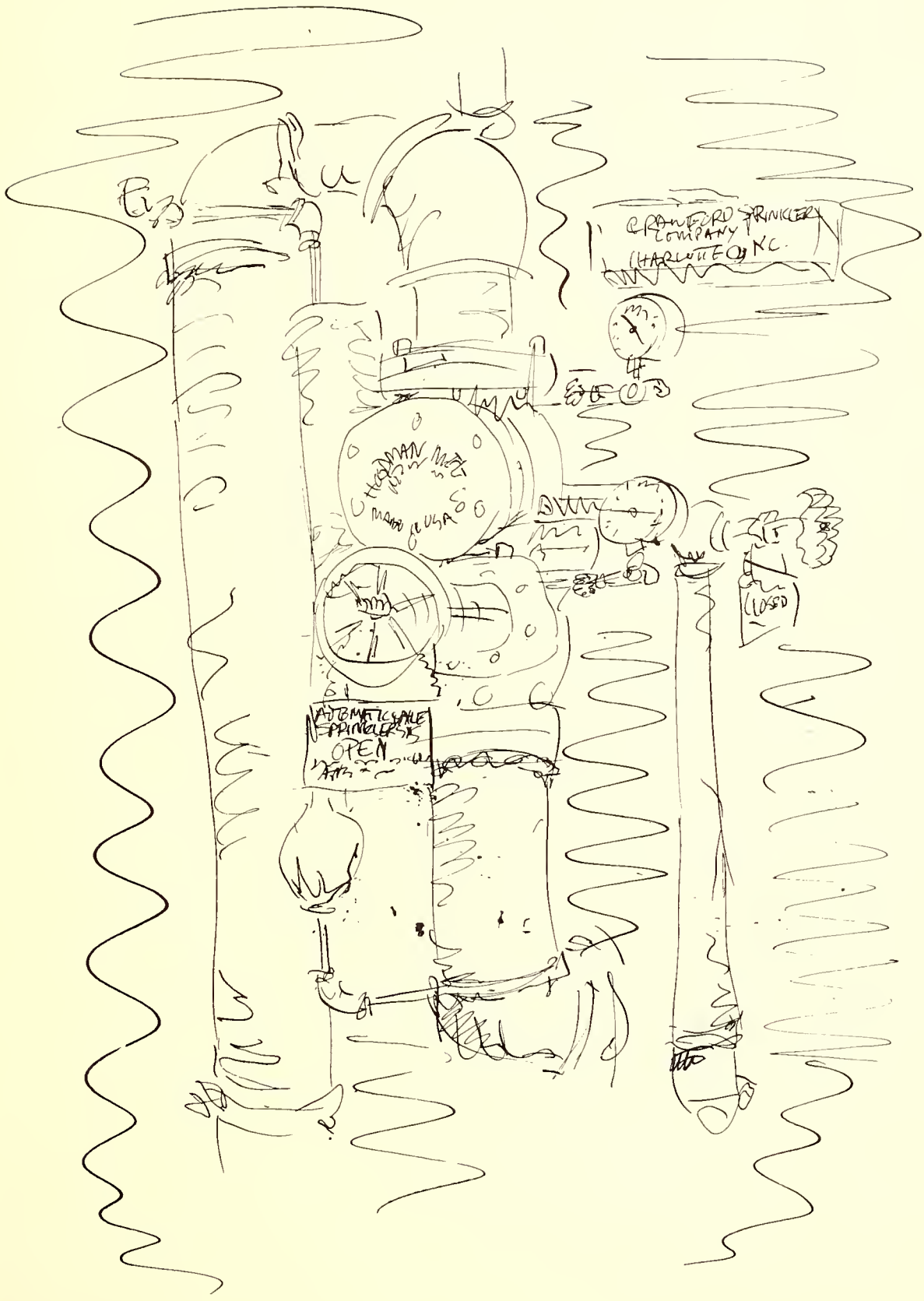
He came running running in the path of a busy ant
who is looking for food.
Maybe from the tennis courts.
Being something besides human,
he caught me by the heart and woke me up
at the precise first instant that he caught my eyes.
About five-years-old and full
and full of what you want to call by name
but you can't for the remorse that
gets stuck in your throat.
He was alone. Like me.
He was running. Like me.
He ran except that he flew.
He really danced. And frolicked so light
and so fast that only with
Great Difficulty
did I manage to keep so fanatical an eye on him.
And for all this he was immortal,
not of earth.
He ran in front of behind me:
I called to him;
the wind didn't answer.
Neither did he.
I thought 'I'm crazy or must be because he isn't for real.'
I was glad. If ever I was going to be crazy,
the night was good.
It was a good night.
I looked back.
He was on the merry-go-round
He wasn't alone. Another kid had run to him.
No other kid ran to me.
They played as he lesser than gallantly
fell from his own private heaven
to Good Old Earth
with the rest of us. the rest of us.
No never mind. They were coming after all,
I would rather have stayed in my swing.
Maybe.
I mean Sometimes I just kind of want
to be something different in the hearts
of the people whose hearts I'm in, am I?
Maybe for a day I'll try.
Am I ever in your dreams except
the Wet ones?

— NANCY CRUMPLER

ON LAUGHING OUT LOUD IN CLASS

A teasing tickle ruffles up my fear
And like the serpent coaxing Eve to sin
It slyly sneaks into a silly grin
Exploding as it hits the atmosphere.

— GALE HULL



I knew all about guppies. You know,
when they were pregnant I could tell.

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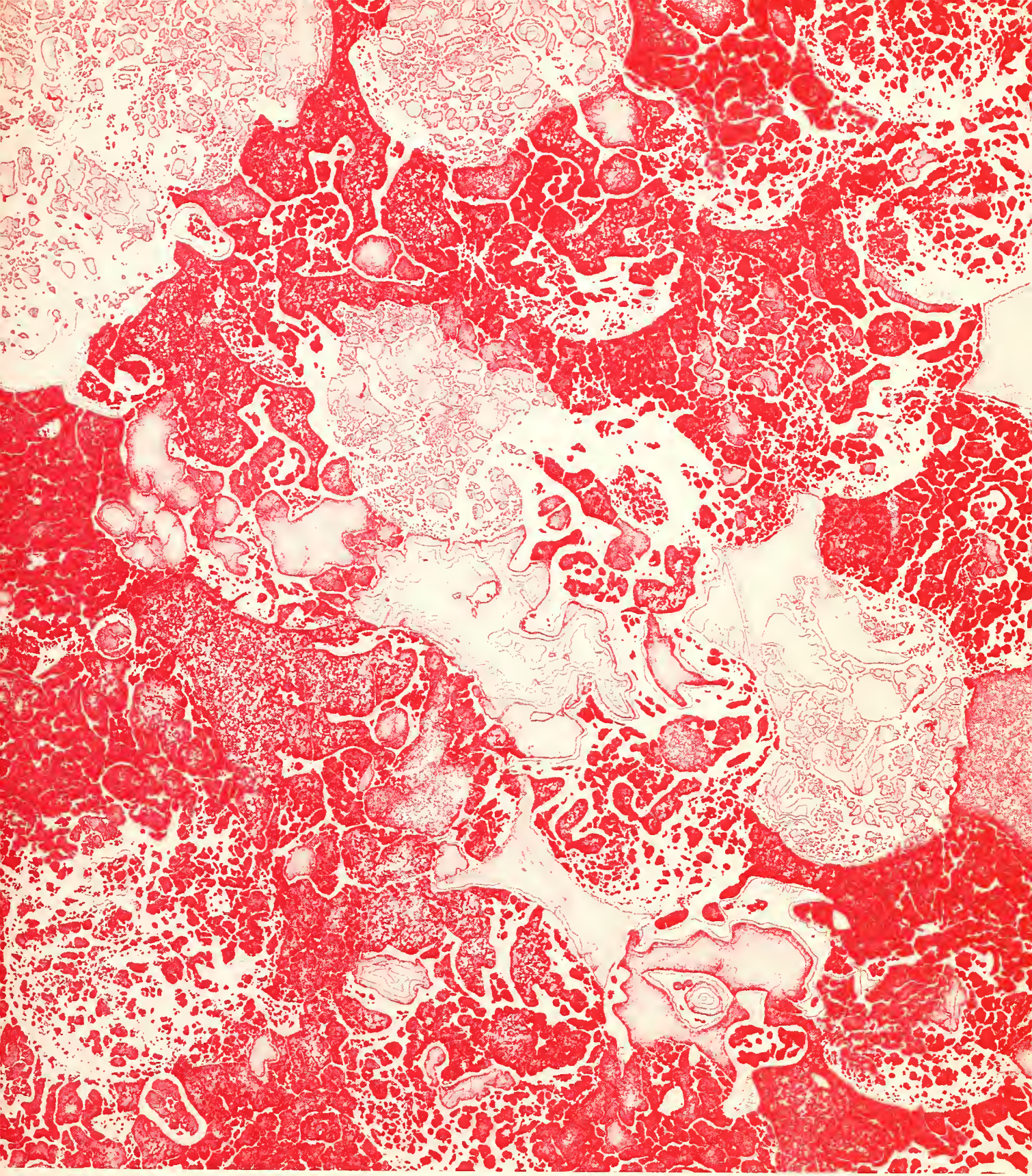
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Idle Conjectures

Ubangi woman
with a lost
lower plate
Travel through time
Encased in a giant gelatine capsule
Has Anyone kissed
the violent purple pendulum
touching your chest
Lain tastebuds alongside
your swollen tongue?
Sucked the scarred hairlip?
A pot-pourri of perversions awaits you
Make pace towards the massage parlors
Did Mother never tell you
or the whispering prismatic mirror
of the guilt you inflict?

Anonymous

XIII

So surface I from murky silence now
as waters ripple in their dread of night
to scatter pieces of my broken vow
like ashes in the solemn parting rite
and leave me looking numb without an urn
in which to hold the morbid souvenir
(of us?), so pigeons murmur lost concern
in vapor folds that drape the fluid bier.

As infants die unborn and I see weak-
ly the plight (of love?) that withers tongue-tied,
so shy and hushlike forward slips the meek
arrival of dissolving scribble sighed/
but ripples shudder as your footsteps fall
to sweep alive the anthems we made stall.

Karin Lindgren

XVIII

I had no fear of heights. So try I did,
Sir, to swan-dive in the wind. Yes, I knew
I would not swim, so wanted I to rid
myself of your bondage. Wingless I flew
so fast so deep so down, and silver things
kept spinning nearer, almost up to me—
and now it seems my deathspin sudden brings
you this alibi hopelessly empty.

So slightly stunned am I before you, Sir,
while somehow still within me something screams
for its freedom of speech. Did I prefer
above you, in fact, my paranoid dreams?
Your Honor, no more can I say now as
I see you are and (Oh, my God!) I was.

Karin Lindgren



Peggy Bender '73

Closed Doors, Locking

I'm awake and spilling out into the chilled wet of the morning, straining for the solid thump of Spanish door, laughing shakily at the space widening between myself and this house of closed doors locking. Leaving them all I'm heading away to the city's center, to school. The bus stop in sight I remember amarillo. That circle for bus stopping splashing a bit of sunny color on the morning of grass and trees, verde, and the roses . . . roja y las flores muy pequenas son azul. My foot comes crushing and grinding these flowers for I remember Father blue, Father silent. And what is Mother's color? My Mother yellow as she rises with her hair streaming down and around her shoulders. My Mother red as her earrings ting jingly and her dress swishes as she steps. My Mother black as she raises her hand to come crashing down, down on Jenny, poor Jenny, home surviving the last of her holiday. "Please" I charged her as I left, "stay out of Mother's way, she's in her mood, remember." I warned her recalling last night.

Last night when my sister sat rocking, knees against chest. Her eyes spoke such puzzled symbols as she stared just to the right of, through the painting, through the delicate dream of orange poppies in the field. She sat rocking so, webbed and bound about herself with such frail arms and rigid back bending, without elegance. Some defeat held painfully in the tight clutching of her chest. The T.V.'s blaring haze caught her face blue, caught her face wrinkling into such soft shivering folds . . . trying to say, wanting to hold, be held, but jestures so stiffly cornered would jerk so, like a wintered branch pushed forward, forward, by the wind. So, she remained, tightly holding knees against chest, so terribly, terribly frail, my sister, trembling.

"Trembling!, Why Jennifer you're trembling. Haven't you enough sense to wear a robe?" said Mother suddenly flicking on lights and slamming, slamming windows surely closed. "And turn off that T.V. you little sneak. Every-time I turn my back . . . what a revolting little girl you are." And she grabbed Jenny by the bladed back and thrust her before the mirror. "Look at you with your bangs in your eyes, no one can even see your pretty face". Jenny's muscles reflected tight and stern. With her jaw jutted she stared at the mirror with its dust and spots while Mother spoke down on hair unparted, as if her words might sink and find a place at Jenny's center. Mother looking up caught my eyes in the mirror and then away again, falling away from the mirror searching in tired depths of eyes puffed and swollen. "Oh," she said turning, dropping herself into spindly chair before me. "Oh, James" she sighed heaving one fat thigh atop the other. I knew she felt Jen moving at her back but I saw her moving stiff with anger, tensing, tearing.

"Why was I so abrupt," she begged with aged lines furrowing. Against the chair's back, so tensed, so angry

at her black and mean, I softened, for the cruel lights cast such green shadows on her day worn features. "It's just that she looked so odd, just sitting there and staring off like that. An eight year old kid who spends most of her time staring off into space or scheming up some meanness, . . . It's just not normal!" No words would come. I watched the lighting of the cigarette, following the motions of hands fumbling, tapping, firing, and shakily reaching for the twisted "o" of receptive mouth. After the first blowing of the grey from between her teeth and out into the air, the room began to hang with smoke.

Smoking, clouds and screeching and the bus wakes me. The driver is before me black and I feel a heated blush creeping. Balancing against slippery silvered pole, I feel money warm and jumbled in my pockets. Everyone is watching. I know that without turning round. The only one standing, the only one fumbling with money and books. With the money tinkling against the meter, I jig and jostle my way to the window seat, hoping to escape the smells of bus and catch the smells of morning. The smells, oh, yes, the smells of Mother smoking, last night, filling the room. "Oh James" she said, this time entreating, "do go sit with your Father until dinner. He's sitting in the dining room alone again." And so, as every night, I sit to the right of Father waiting . . . waiting for Jenny to get up the courage to come in, waiting for Mother who is waiting for her drink to take effect and finally waiting for Father to raise his head and peer around at everything in order. He must listen like a blind man for all the proper sounds because not until we are all in our proper places with food ready on the table does he flick, flick the pages of the paper into shape and set it down with a slap at his side. He then smiles grimly and launches into one of the stories he's burned out of the paper, and if Father tells a story you'll surely listen. He stares so as he speaks with such wide unblinking as if the conversation danced on a taunt wire stretching from the center of his blueness to the center of your own. His eyes burn naked and bare like bulbs and itch a fire in your eyes, but if you dared to look away, if you dared to blink to stop the pain, there would come a certain firmness in the jaw and a cold film passing from the lashes and the talk would stop shortly.

"Son", a warm hand upon my cheek wakes me to the bus. So close to my face is whisper of wine and dead teeth. Jerking around to the left I find the whitest man I've ever seen. His hair softly curling is cotton and his skin is smooth, not lined but curving like sheets. "Where are you going?". The man pressed closer. Shudders racked at my legs, so I turned and answered the lightposts whizzing by, "to school". Where? "Walton". Even as the words escaped my mouth, even as I turned to watch this mans eyes swallow them up, I knew I should not have told him that. Can't trust this face smiling, then

speaking, then smiling, for the smiles are either a bit too early or too late, having the habit not of putting periods but of putting question marks instead. Jumping with the next gentle grazing of my cheek, I brushed past the man feeling his leg warm. The door is before me but my legs are stiff and my books and arms are dragging.

As James left school that evening the sweat poured from his hands, dampening his books. He walked with machine like rapidity into the night fast falling. The shadows tightening round him, he clutched his books tighter with frenzied wetness. He felt each chill wind stealing up his spine to the nape of his neck. As the minutes passed he began to loosen, shifting his books to one arm he put the other round the lightpost, feeling its size supporting. But with the first scruffling near him he would stand upright with eyes straining. Finally, the bus pulled huge and reeking before him. He boarded hesitating, searching all the faces flouresced in the aging greeness of the light. Satisfied, he moved to sit near cotton dressed woman with shopping bags of comfortable celery and eggs emerging. After a time the colored neons of the city faded into the regular whiteness of the suburbs. Burning, they forced his lids, weary and aching from the too wide staring, from the rabbit like intensity, to close and let the itchy pain recede. The driver nudged him at his stop. He started and looked about him to find the whole bus empty and he, almost safely home. Out of the bus, up the street, across the lawn, dry now, and in through the Spanish door he ran, breathing and then not breathing, in short gasps. At the door he paused and waited for his heart to stop that thumping. He watched his Father's back in the dining room searching in the paper for facts for dinner.

The Father suddenly turned his head toward James. He must have sensed the hesitation at this back. "Come in" he said "sit down", and he quickly lost himself again in the staring at the paper. Soon all were assembled again to eat without tasting. The Mother not feeling her drink yet looked out across the table searching among the potatoes and corn for something to say. Suddenly the Father lowered his paper and lifted his head. He was going to speak. The Mother met his gaze with pained expectation, but he riveted his head to his son and asked in a consultory manner "Is everything all right son?" James kept his head bowed hoping for the right words to come, the words that were in the front of his Father's mind. What could he say, how could he say that he feared, he thought, perhaps—a man was to come from the shadows and touch him on the cheek. No, it must be the right words, because if they did not come or worse no words at all then there would come the same chilled masking of the face. "No sir, nothing" and he smiled a straight line across his face. Ah, return smile, he'd been right, his Father hadn't really wanted to know. He never wanted to talk of things that touched that way, on the inside.

"And you Jenny what have you been doing on your holiday?"

"Oh yes, do tell Daddy what you've been doing" spits

the Mother with her eyes slanting and mouth twisting.

"Do tell him what his little darling has been up to. Tell him, that when Mommy asked you to turn off the T.V. for the umpteenth time today that his little pumpkin took the sewing shears and cut the cord. Isn't that cute Daddy?"

James searched Jenny's face for an answer but Jenny sat, as if in another world, smiling, shakily.

"Smiling like a cheshire cat, are you?" the Mother screeched. "You won't have much to smile at when your Father gets to you" and she reached over and pinched Jenny's arm purple. A sickness passed over James and he rose from the table, excusing himself. No one noticed. All eyes were on Jenny.

He headed up the dark hallway to his room. He could hear his Mother's booming "what do you mean leave her alone? Just as long as she's quiet about it you wouldn't care if she burnt the house down."

Safely in his room he set it blazing and then to blaring with radio bursting through the earphone into his ears. He stretched the cord to his bed and climbed beneath the covers, fully clothed. He lay there staring, remembering the man's face curling and forcing his head to keep time to the music. Somehow he fell asleep and later much later awoke to hear his Mother swishing in her gown and robe down the hall.

She must have woken terrified that night, rigid with fear. She had to wander the house easing her body as she saw each sleeping child. Easing the muscles in her back to see that they were safely frozen for a time. She must come close enough to see the rising and the falling, come close enough to touch the huddled curves and creases of such protective folds.

When she entered the room he felt her coming closer, felt her warmth and saw the thickness of her form covered in robe and gown. When she came to his bed he closed his eyes and felt her warm and breathing above him. He convulsed with chill as she touched his cheek but quickly turned, so that she might not notice, so that she might lie down again with her neck loose and her mind letting go. He opened his eyes again. He knew she'd left.

After hours of staring, he rose and felt his way to Jenny's room. His hands extended he edged against the walls. Her room was lit by headlights from the street, creeping through the window and around the walls. He leant over her and saw that her face was streaked and dirty. Her hair, so black, was running in crazy streams over her sheets and twining gently round the boniness of her arms. Her knees were pulled up tightly against her chest and she made only the slightest lump in the mountains of sheets and blankets. James leant back in the rocker and watched the headlights patterned on the wall. He watched them with his hands clutching the chair arm, mid-rock. He watched their slow swimming round the room and waited, waited with unwavering blue gaze for them to pass over and touch him on the cheek. Again and again.

Anonymous



Wanda Hudnall

To Essenine, from Isadora

Mad Russian desire
surging through and around
engulfing us—
drowning
O my Essenine
my insane song
singing me

My laughing yellow babe—
my blue boy
I never had a chance to
say goodbye . . .
I know there's no way I
could have stopped you
in that room
the room that was ours
long ago—
during wine dance days
love dance nights
fed on oysters and champagne
by Aphrodite herself
we were so strong against all tides
flowing, silken days—
my red liberation dancing days!

ah, my little child—
always playing
always needing
but you stole my blood
as well as my love
you drained me so dry
drunk all my mother-milk
snatched all my energy
I was dying—yet full of life
I had to unattach you from me
the sky-pleasure that was ours
gave way to crazy
leeching, sucking
I had to—
I had to—
make you let go
and now—
long after
you took your life—
I took back sadly, with
my great mother-pain,
and gratefully
to you, my child,
my lover,
my husband,
goodbye

Carolyn Johnson

Caught in crystal
Spun by stars
Made by magic inhuman in its touch
A unicorn
Fragile because he is so real
Scorns the sky
As he runs from men.
This is no dream
Though when I go to look
His tiny feet have not even touched the grass.
But I could feel his breath in the wind
And he looked for one moment into my eyes.
This is no dream.
Far above my head
A cloud like a dragon
Swallows the sun into itself.

Kathy Orr



Peggy Bender '73

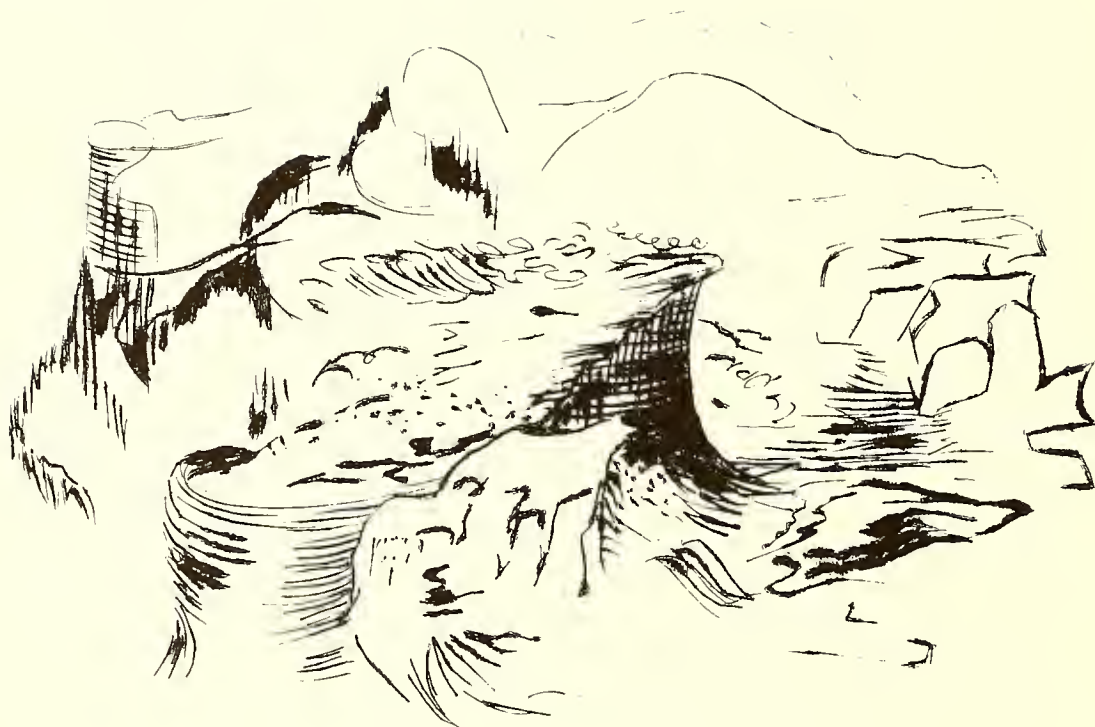
Dark February

In the darkness of the night
it pushes gently my hair,
Gently but with the force of the sea air.
And as I remember how the sea smells
I can imagine the roaring of water
pounding on the shore, surrounding my feet.
No, for it's February in the mountains.
But February like the spring
like the night air has never been before.

Champe Smith



Nancy Richards '73



Wanda Hudnall '73

Courtesan, Her Dull Clientele

This "historial" a Beaupre:
(Religion seems to whore herself
More quickly than the waterfalls,
the crosses more brittle than
the worldly souvenirs, and
50¢ for holy healing water
in a plastic jug
with blessed saints tatoood
across the front) it is a
mechanized museum,
each scene having lifelike
figures done in wax all
to depict the life and death
of saint and relics, and the Miracles
attributed to them and her
for which it's named;
And each room lights up
faith becoming music and in
order and between becoming music
first in francais, than in English.

. . .

two tape-recorded gentlemen
describe the lives and deaths
(already mentioned) After which
the music stops, a buzzer sounds
whereupon the next room is the source
of all the music and the lights and of the
tape-recorded gentlemen.
Wax figures populate the scenes
with their nonexistent stares
(Looking much like corpses)
Almost real except their faces
have no life, their eyes are dull.

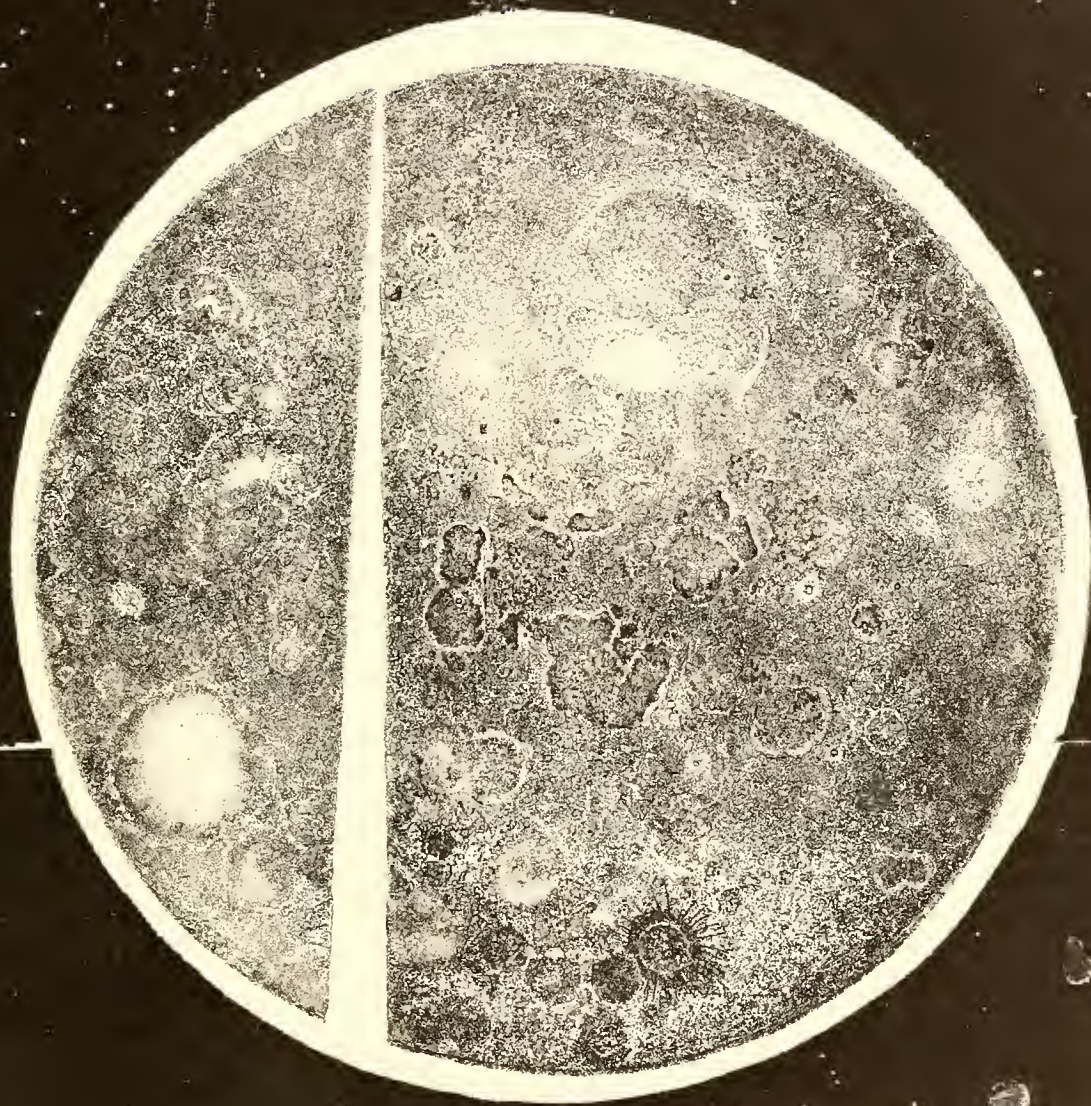
. . .

We began this tour as 7 at the first room
(2 families of 4 and 3)—it was, I think,
the fifth room that I'd noticed
we'd collected more and more with
each buzzer and each room till at
la sortie there were maybe 20 of
us touristes—as if the figures
had changed clothes and followed us
(as soon as their room's light was out)
and leaving you could hardly tell
which ones had been the wax ones
and which not, one said, "the figures were
so lifelike!"
Color postcards, sparkly rosaries
saw us out.

Nancy Crumpler

The stars seemed limp
lost of lucent light
above my moribund mind
catipillars, creeping
across the pavements of
the heavens.
I shut my eyes to block
them from sorrowful sight
and pray until the heavens
spin with kaliedescope colors
the truth.

Helen Gray Thomas



for one who remembers a yellow flower day

yellow flowers beside the road
blue car with its glad-sad load
spins along that strip of time
stretching to eternity
 stretching to the future
 stretching to the past
bordered all by may flow'rs bold
silent shining fields of gold

golden like sunshine
gladdening down on all
golden in the daybright
fate it is to call

knowing—in the bright gold flow'rs
fated future's hold
touching that—three pensing beings
encased in bluemobile
can only guess at, hope at, dream at
yet not know
wisdom a small yellow flower grows

Patti Nanke

Tea Pot

She was alone now, her friends back at college, her suitcase in the trunk: the sound of the car purring in the dark calmed her, she had finally done it. She had spent the last two months wondering about him, how he was, where he was, and what he was doing. It was now only ten miles to the farm house.

Winding up a narrow dirt road, she asked herself if this was right. She had called the night before only to find that he wasn't there, his little brother had been busted and he had gone home to see him. She had wanted to talk to him about their relationship; there had to be something definite and final between them. Now she was worried about him, his brother, and his family. "No, it wouldn't be wise to talk to him now," she had decided, and she hopped into the car and started driving to where she thought he might be. She had to be with him now, they had always helped each other out of depression.

A tiny light gave her direction and she pulled into a fenced-in yard. Her lights gleamed on the white frame house and caught a chicken running under the porch. "So this is it", she thought as she turned off the engine and held her breath.

It was a cool breezy night and the moon was three quarters full surrounded by stars. Her hair blew off her shoulders as she straightened out of the car; the door crashed shut in the silent night. Walking towards the porch she was startled by a low growl as an English setter appeared from beneath the steps. A grating creak made her jump and, turning, she saw the swing on the porch gliding back and forth, it's hinges rusty.

She cautiously peeked into a warm bright room. It looked like him, cheerful, nice with white curtains, yet mannish with guns over the mantle. A braid scatter rug lay before the fireplace where a fire was just gaining strength. Smoke rose from a cigarette placed precariously on a beer can next to a still moving rocking chair. "Well at least I know that someone's here," she breathed deeply again, and knocked once, twice, three times . . . no answer.

She tried the door . . . unlocked. "That's funny," she thought, "why would the cigarette be burning and the door unlocked, what if something has happened?" She took two steps and closed the door behind her.

The room smelled wonderful and she thought of the times they could have had in such a happy place. "If only things had worked out"; she smiled and shook her head, "there are always ifs". A whistle from a corridor . . . the kitchen. She followed the noise and turned off the stove where a teapot boiled furiously, the hand painted tea pot they bought the night she had realized that everything was fine. Two cups with tea bags in them waited on a table; she filled them. The kitchen was clean, she noticed; he always was a stickler for cleanliness. The dishes were drying from dinner and she opened the refrigerator to find a roast and a half-eaten pie on the shelves . . . musselberry, his favorite. "At least he's eating well".

She heard a creak and turned, someone was there. She cautiously moved into the corridor; there it was again, a creaking noise coming from a room next to the kitchen. She opened the door, the light fell first on the pot-bellied stove he had prized so, then on the horrified faces of a couple entwined among the sheets on the brass bed that she had heard about.

No one said a word, no one moved. She felt as if she was drowning, struggling for breath and for words, horrified, shocked, and embarrassed. "Excuse me" came from somewhere. She shut the door and running out of the house, realized too late that she held the tea pot in her hand.

The car moved quickly down the road, dust and rocks flying. Soon it was silent again. She couldn't cry, she actually felt sick. The tea pot turned over as she sped around a curve and water poured out, burning her leg. She pulled over and threw the tea pot into the woods and burst into tears.

Helen Gray Thomas

Winging far too near,
A shooting star's snared
By an unconquerable force.

Joys sought for an hour
Oft may be transformed
To longings for the lasting.

Brave stars may perish;
Mem'ries remain . . . And
That which was, is forever.

Susan Bundy

Reeling, pitching—
the continuous motion
creates boredom.
my mind is rocking
to the sway of the waves.
the white caps upset my thoughts
as boredom confuses the sea.

A fresh opening
slowly drawing the sun.
the warmth caresses each petal.
the fire ball forces the bud
to expose its secret center—
And life is created—
taken for granted—

and dies.

Dede Alexandre



Champe Smith '73



Nancy Richards '73

Noctambulist

Dreams, dreams,
 dreams—
I walk often in my sleep;
Balancing on seconds,
 obscurities,
Darkness surrounds shadow-filled sleep.
Stepping lightly over gravel,
Silently passing through unknown doors,
Eyes opening by perception's touch—
 thoughts
Transfixed by rambling peace.
Bordering on wakeful moments
 wandering,
Unaware of my feet.

Jane McCutchen

The Breakfast House

Dappled by muted shadows, an old stone smokehouse with a cupola roof stands, close to our house, silent under the annual fall of cherries from the twisted tree over its roof. When we were small, it was a place of refuge from anything that we didn't want to be bothered with. Neither of my sisters had any idea what to call it until our mother told us it had been used to cure bacon. Since bacon and breakfast went together, we named it the "Breakfast House".

The walls were of very old stone—so old that it was turning white in splotches—and very thick. There were always spiders in the corners, but we made it a point not to look for them after a while. Sometimes, when we would touch the stone, bits of it would crumble from our hand, and powder the floor with a film of grey dust. Two small windows competed with each other, each trying to let the most light in while glaring at each other. The wooden bars in them made us think of prisons, and the huge, scarred beams with rusty chains and hooks still hanging from them were used in the Civil War for torturing Yankee prisoners. The thick brown dust on the top of the clumsy beams was from the prisoners' bones, who had been tortured, and then left chained above to die.

The floor was dirt, but not the type of dirt that is dusty. It's dark surface had a smooth, polished texture, and even the bumps were rounded. A thick, wooden door with black iron hinges would be barred from the inside. It hung slightly lopsidedly, and creaked when we opened it. One of the round, black bolts on the outside was the dot for the "i" in "Private" that we painted on

the outside in leftover creosote. A thick threshold rose from the sunken floor, high enough to trip us when we were in a hurry. The molding at the top of the door harbored wood-borers. They gnawed huge, round holes in the rotten wood, and we would look above our heads each time we entered, fearful that they would sting us.

The roof did not mold into the walls, but left an overlapped space through which ivy grew. The ivy avoided covering the walls with windows, but chose instead to grow over the wall opposite the door. This wall was covered by an unbroken mass of green, heart-shaped leaves all year round. In one corner, there was a large, brick-red drainpipe which ran directly from the inside, through the thick stone wall, to the outside. The cats used this as their personal entrance.

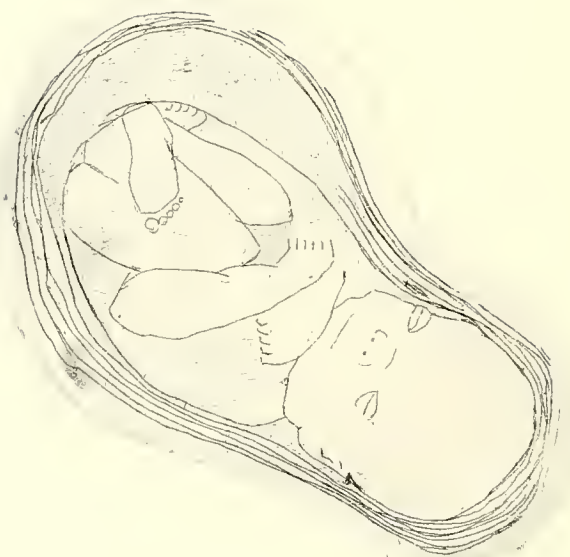
When we played in the breakfast house in the summer, the damp air was cool, even on the hottest day, and the darkness, rarely penetrated by sunlight, kept it cool. Chairs, no longer good enough for the house, were hidden in the breakfast house. Our cats were born in the stuffing of these chairs, and the matted padding clung to our feet when we walked in it. An old driftwood lamp was our hatrack, and a broken china vase from Japan was a spittoon for the cowboys. A 1920-style lawn chair with rusty, green upholstery was used as the queen's throne. Turkey feathers in one corner were for writing the way Benjamin Franklin did, and for the dressy hats.

Now, cobwebs tie everything to lawn mowers and bikes, weaving them into an indistinguishable mass of spindle-thread.

Jonna Pierce



Nancy Richards '73



A Southern Lament

I lost my wits, while eating grits
This morning at breakfast time.
Without much sleep, it's hard to keep
The better half of my mind.

My mind in a jumble, I repeatedly mumble,
"Oh! What has become of my head?"
And the only drives that can keep me alive
Are sex and the grateful dead.

D. F.

Jack
in his youngly painted box of tin
will
ALLOFASUDDEN!
pop UP
to a whimsical tune

on a coiled piece of wire
he will totter merrily
and amaze too little eyes
with his stupid carnival
of painted face and burlesque

and jack
(a two-eyed simpleton?)
will go crazy with the strains
of his own circus
and the paradox
of his minstrelsy when the lid
is closed.

the onemanshow
is dropped into
an already full toy-box
by i's too little satisfied
(leaving six eyes safe to cry.)

Debbie Mutch



Peggy Bender '73

Eden

After I
turned your birdbath over,
picked your purple clover,

trampled your snowberry,
mangled your rosemary,

let my savage frenzy
scatter all your pansies,

sucked your honeysuckle
with an impish chuckle,

your voice didn't harden
to ban me from your garden.

I gaped at you dumbly
and could only numbly
wonder why.

Karin Lindgren



SPRING - 1973

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Cynde Manning

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Helen Gray Thomas

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City Pigeons

Multi-hued grey
Even their eyes
A clear and light
Mixture of black and white.
Picking a path carefully in the rush hour traffic
They graze against the sides
of sooty fenders
And flap around a
Group of garbage cans
Outside an Italian restaurant,
Poking their neckless heads down and up—in and out:
A mechanical motion—
One crumb and then another—fast—
Before it's claimed by another
Greedy beak.

They're everywhere I go;
Roosting in the gutter
Outside my hotel window,
Cooing a small and smooth
Oinky sound,
They look oily
In the downpour
Feathers flattened and meshed.

But they don't huddle
Cold and wet—
They just won't huddle
For warmth or protection
Or love or whatever
Creatures huddle to get.

They pose apart
Like separate statues
And sometimes squawk
And each fly away.

A cold and homeless lot, I thought,
And I felt sorry for them
Because Valerie
Liked to make them scatter;
She would run right into the
Center of their semi-circle
And grimace and yell—
She hated pigeons
For no reason I could see.

And they would all rise up
For a minute in their fear,
And then return to separate places
With a quiet resignation

Their small smoggy eyes
Never changed or looked
Startled—just bored, glazed
With the life in town.

And I became
Accustomed to their
Ways:
Their small oily voices
Gently prodding me awake
In the mornings and
Their staring round eyes
Gazing past me all day.
I missed my companions
When I left.

Dixie Black '73

Descending

I
top
all
but
the
sun
above
amaze
alone
This needle point
pins Paradise low
so slow
silvers
a glass
serpent
between
islands
Oh Gothic
cathedral
tickle my
dream not
Vacant dome
wake me not
with insane
echo of God
My last Louis
paces restive
gathering his
severed words
My last general
sleeps below me
dreaming empire
waking Waterloo
Swaying giddy with my
days mercurial doves
on lucent wings I fly
below dark from above
Insanely spinning
downward thinking
never of crashing
keep I on dreaming
just am I ignoring
the city upwaking
The colors explode a startling blur
and scramble screams in dizzy purrs
What flimsy airs did I empty prefer
above streams silverer sometimes than
the highflown lure of my cloudy chimera
Drop I so far below
my living nightmare
that one birdsong
escapes crashing
and soars more high
than dreams piping pure
this awaking sad to sleep

Karin Lindgren '75

You don't like my laughter—you want tears.
Even Elmers won't glue together the pieces you keep showing me—
the pile of debris I've left behind.
If you had some binoculars you could see how really long the path is.
why bother. It all looks the same . . .
And stop giving me mirrors full of my face, my mind, my soul—I saw it
reflected in a thousand eyes, a thousand times; their eyes were full
of my tears.
So I laugh
Softly, so as not to make any holes in the fog.
You can cry—guess that makes you real.
Good—fill the room with your humanness—so no one will notice I don't
perspire or pray or cry . . .
You cry for me, my friend, maybe you can feel the guilt for my sins.
And I will pay you back—by sinning more—shattering pieces of souls and
leaving them around for you.
I'll fill your days . . .
For you've gotten as much joy from moaning over the sharp, silver
pieces of broken souls as I did from breaking them.
Cry about that as I
Clutch my stomach in uncontrollable laughing-pain.

Anonymous '75

Another Notch In His Belt

Day broke cheerlessly. Pale, cold light barely exposed a neat and sparsely furnished room. He was quietly dressing. Everything about him was gray. His weathered face was covered with a day's growth of beard. The nondescript thread bare garb had long since lost any trace of color it may have had. The sleeves were too long, the jacket too loose. His pants hung, empty from his waist to his skin covered boots. A feeling of aloneness overwhelmed him. His independent spirit was struggling against need. He had always been able to care for himself. This feeling of self reliance had kept him going in many trying situations. Why today, he wondered, why do I feel so desolate? Is it the mere fact that winter is almost upon me? After all many is the winter I have loved, worked through, and fought against.

After gathering his thoughts together, and having finished dressing he lighted his fire. Somehow the bright, dancing flame didn't seem to warm him as it should. Soon the coffee was perking and the grits were bubbling in the black iron skillet. He ate unhurriedly but without relish. He pushed his chair from the table and took his woolen cap from the hook, and wrapped a tattered scarf about his neck. A Handsome Kentucky rifle rested over the mantle. He eyed it with appreciation. This most cherished possession had been with him since his eighteenth birthday—how proud he was of it. He remembered the occasion with warmth. His father had presented it to him. Maybe it was particularly important, since shortly after receiving this gift, he lost his father and friend. Now sixty years later—as he looked at his rifle—he recollected the good times they had had; this lightened his spirit.

As he left the cabin gusts of wind pushed against him and he was chilled. Thoughts of a successful hunt spurred him on and with head down he walked on into the woods. The heavy undergrowth and large tree trunks afforded him some protection. He tried to be patient. His eyes scanned every branch of every tree, and followed animal

tracks hoping to refurbish his larder, which was now empty.

Cautiously, and silently he made his way. Suddenly the sound of breaking twigs offered the possibility of a successful hunt. His hands twitched and his eyes strained to focus on the intruder. An enormous buck stood frozen in his tracks, realizing the mistake he had just made. The old man raised his gun to his shoulder, and steadily aimed the barrel towards its target. Heartlessly the cold had frostbitten the tips of his fingers so that when he squeezed the trigger a sharp sensation spurred through his body. His arm jolted in resistance. The crack bounced from one tree to the next, and the bullet strayed from its destination. The deer bounded off into the woods in want of refuge. The old man stood heartbroken, his eyes followed the white flashes out of sight. The woods were silent and forbidding once again to the old man. He pushed forward, pausing only a short time to reload his rifle. His hands fumbled as they attempted to pour the powder from the horn into the gun barrel. The wind tore at his clothing forbidding him to go another step, but he ignored its threats and pushed onward, leaving his failure behind.

The old man headed back to his cabin wearied and discouraged. He watched the snow crystals fall gently on the last vestiges of fall. The dark cabin was a welcome sight. He stirred the remaining coals, and lit his evening fire. His body was almost numb with fatigue. Unconsciously he placed his rifle above the mantle and removed his outer garment. Collapsing into the chair the old man rubbed his hands briskly to restore their circulation. He pondered again, the question of survival without dependence on other. His decision was swift, at all costs he must be free so after starting his solitary meal of coffee and grits, he tightened his belt another notch and hoped that with the dawn of another day— success might be his.

Galvin Gentry '76



Dabney Dalton '73



Nancy Richards '73

Knife in the Dark

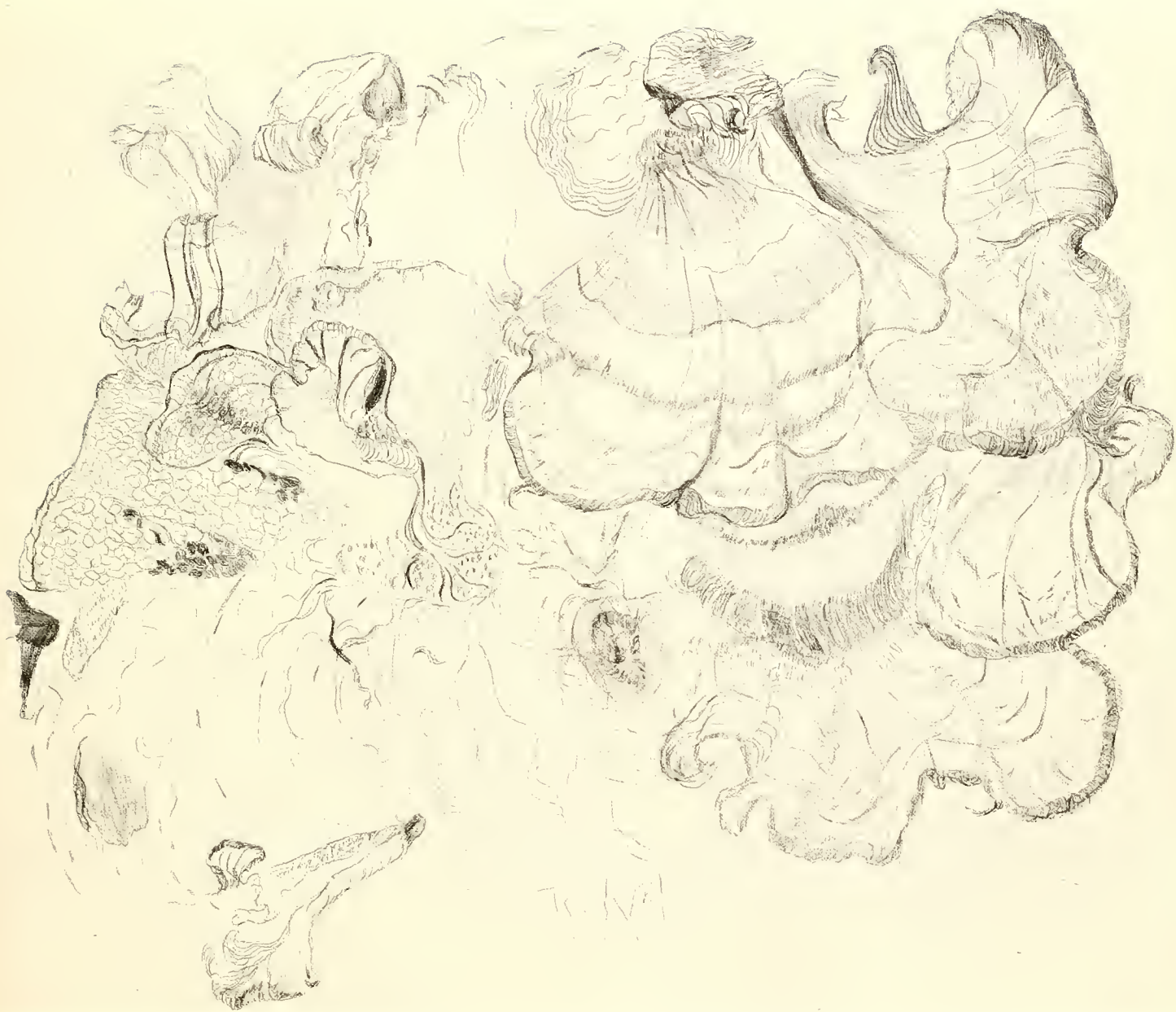
The night was a knife
Not cut-able, but a cutting edge itself
Drawing a careful line of blood low on the horizon.
All division was sharp
Shadows, like sheathed steel, mingled their blades:
You and I stood together on the fine point of things
With room for only us,
And sometimes that not enough.
“Daggers!” cries Macbeth—
Did he know
That the moon is only a sword’s pitch or fall away
And the spear’s path
That terrible life’s agony
Is laid in the mind
By the tilt of the spirit,
The darkness slashing out of darkness?

Kathy Orr '75

April Years

So the clouds trembled
and the sun,
 slipping from the shadows,
rolled into clear skies.
And
 the rain clouds
 flew
 across the mountains
as green shoots appeared
 and more hearts than the flowers'
 budded
and the April years began.

Gray Thomas '75



Ann Stokes '75

You May Never Leave This Place

We all sat around in our white toilet paper houses, surrounded by grey and black trees and bushes. The floating side walks and the spreading white lawns moved all around us. Then we looked up and saw Them, staring at us, smothering us, "You may never leave this place!"

We were trapped in this place, made to go about our zombie lives. It was okay for the kids, they never knew the difference; but for us, we knew. The kids were given little fluffs by Them to keep themselves occupied; as long as they were happy. But we weren't—our parents were taken from us just when we were old enough to need them. Why? They only tried to invent an escape from our white, misty world. We too, would be exterminated when we proved to be a threat to Their world.

Michael and I talked about it alot. We spoke in whispers, the threats we would carry out if They tried to take us.

We walked in the marshmellow parks on shifting side-walks, wondering what had happened to the pink and blue sky.

"I hate it, god damn it—I want to leave, Michael!"

Then They opened Their wide white mouths, and a spear of lightning struck the cotton candy tree beside me. The thunderstorm came, just as it always did, when anyone spoke against Their world. The children ran for shelter in their toilet paper houses, but Michael and I walked back in silence through our wet punishment. I was disappointed that Michael hadn't stuck up for me against our blank, white rulers.

"I couldn't Kit, don't you see? They would've exterminated me. I'm the boy and They always take boys first—we're the biggest threat."

"Oh, Michael, Michael, I just don't care anymore. I'm just waiting for those cotton candy Things to take you and me. What about Philip and Adrian? They're all I've got left—I promised Mum and Dad I'd look out for them—what will they do without me?" I started to cry. Michael put a strong arm around me, but said nothing. They had come again—

"Damn you, damn you, damn you!" I screamed, "Can't you leave us alone?"

The thunder came again—but no punishing rain. The cavernous mouths smiled open again and beat us with golden rays of whips. Blinding heat hurt my eyes, burned my skin, making me perspire. I couldn't see Michael, I couldn't see anything. I heard him calling me. "Michael, don't let them take me—not yet, oh no, no!"

Then it stopped. Their looming mouths shut and billowed. Vibrating, laughing at me, They sent Their merciless, too familiar fog around me again. I stared at Them, watching Them make shapes. I saw an opening, and thought I saw Mum and Dad up there, and the Farleys, and old Ned Vail, and . . . , They eased together and blocked my view. They erupted, flowing over each other, getting nearer and farther. I sat down, weeping, while They threw little white diamond shaped things at me. It was comforting after the searing heat, but then it turned into rocks, pelting stones, hitting my face and body, hurting my skin.

I ran—ran until I arrived at my toilet paper house. Where was Michael? Where was he? Turning from my house, I stumbled along the fluffy streets, calling his name, while the rocks pelted my burnt skin.

I got back to the park where we had walked. I didn't want to see, I was afraid, but it was too late. I saw the white, misty, shape of Michael, fading from the park bench. "But he wasn't old enough—no not yet. Please don't take him from me, not now, not yet!" I pleaded in vain.

They rumbled, thundered Their hideous laughter, splitting Their cotton candy sides, Their Q-tip eyes bulging out, mocking me. I shrank back as they loomed closer, stuffing Their snowing fingers at me; and then They separated to form a white velvet lined hole.

"You may never leave this place—you will be the last to go!"

The clouds closed together again.

Holly M. Orrisett '75

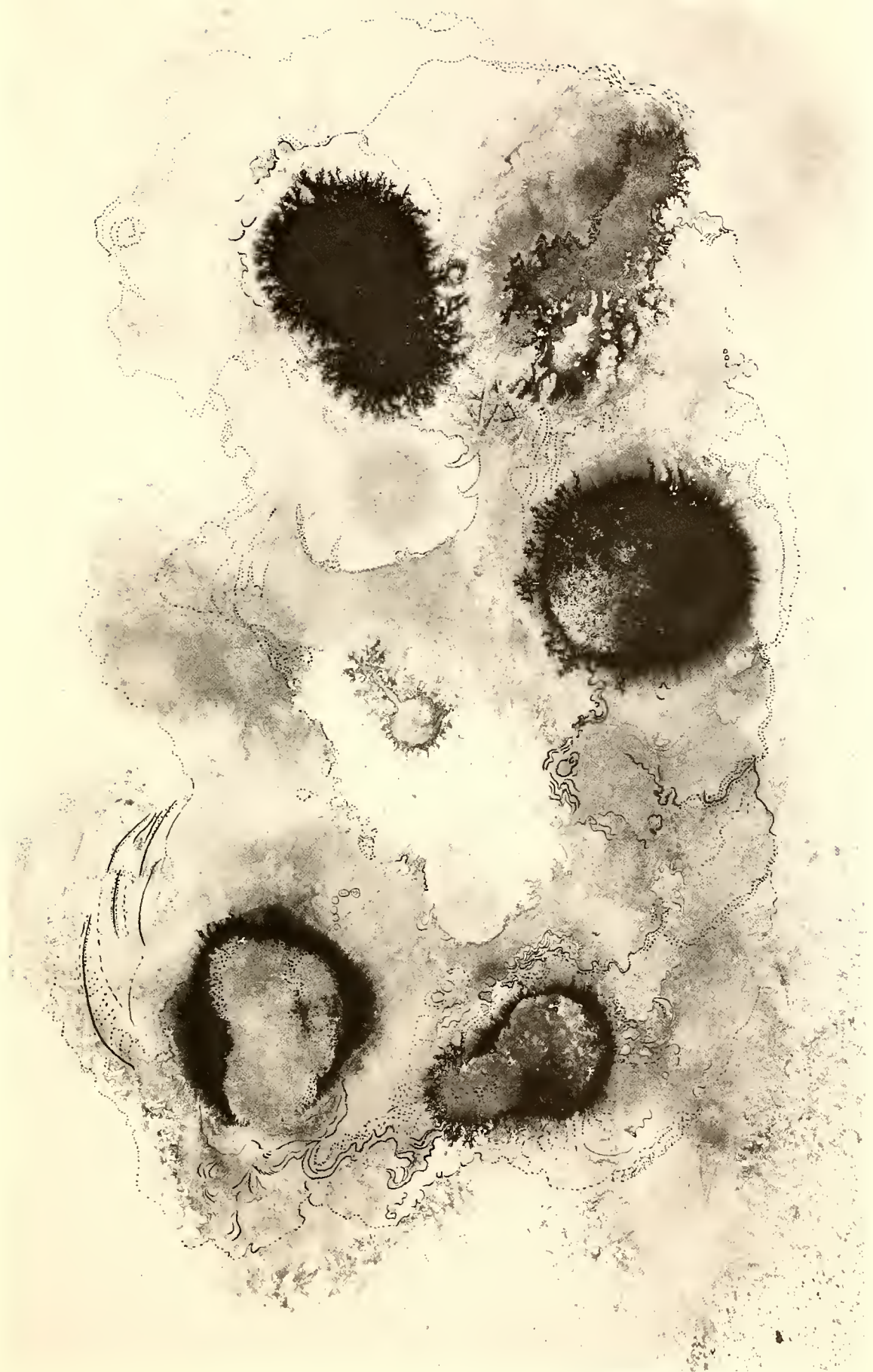


Sara Stokes '75

Fish Still Under Water

I wake each morning
 standing
At my east window
 looking
Over fields and two muddy ponds,
 a distant mountain,
Foot-trails and cow-paths,
 letting my eyes follow the lines,
Wondering
 who lives inside the shadows.
I watch the sun slowly spread
 selecting different trees.
 knowing
Tomorrow,
 it will be the same;
 fish still under water
Breathing,
 oscillating with the slow current,
Mud-covered and hungry,
 wishing the ice would melt;
I remember walking in my sleep
 waking with my voice
Holding a lamp in my hand
 laughing, "it was nothing;"
But weary from gravelled paths
 I walk in my dreams
Wondering
 where I want to go,
Frightened
 that I shouldn't wake alone.

Jane McCutchen '73



Jan Storey '73

XXVII

On go I zigzag, dancing-dizzy dazed,
through this cosmic Coney Island, just so
thrill-seeking still, just so loose leaking low
laughter, just so shrill shrieking pink-amazed.
I cannot get this labyrinth unmazed:
all hotdogged and ballooned, glass egos blow
my own tongue back at me; I gaping slow
keep bumping circles, dancing-dizzy dazed.

How shall I dopey find the exit door,
to suck solution in and hiccough bold
the long last gasp of stale futility?
Ellipsing trampled gum bubbles once more,
collide I sickeningly with panic, cold/
eclipsing any waking suns of me.

Karin Lindgren '75



Jane Lucas '73

Sterling Simmons

Sterling Simmons standing alone in a cold white room with
eyes glazed absorbed in the cold white walls. A
single light centers on a sweating face, on the
sticky drops rolling into an open mouth.

Sterling Simmons standing in silence listening to the throb-
bing, the double throb in a sunken chest with hands
shaking, knees buckling, feet glued to the cold white floor.
A single noise bouncing off the walls sinking into
an empty mind. The strangled gasp echoing in a numbed throat.

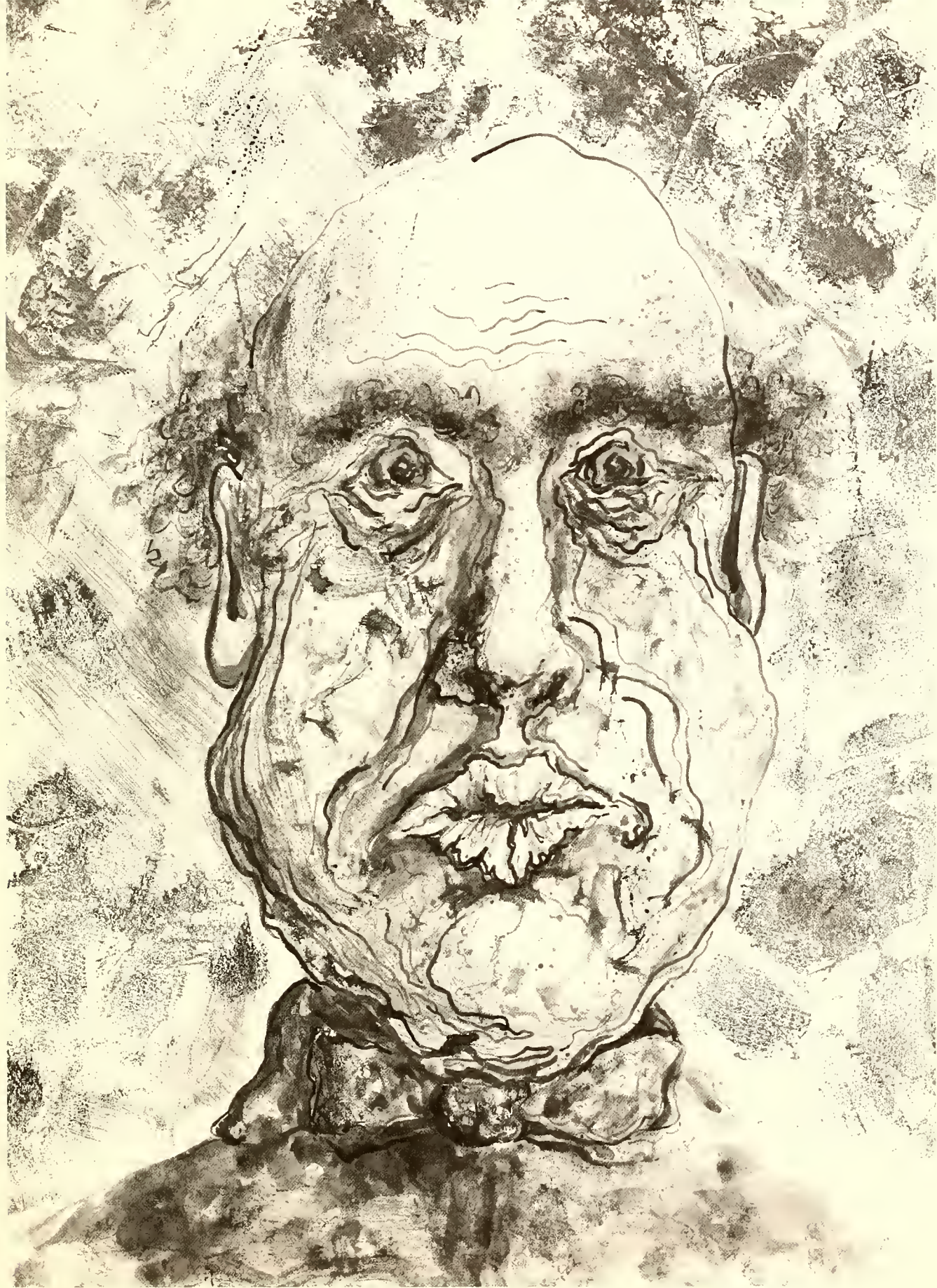
Sterling Simons kneeling helpless as the cold white walls
focus on their victim. He gapes blindly at the crisp
white paper in his hand . . . the typed words glaring out
at him. He reads his name . . .

Sterling Simmons . . . blah blah blah

Sterling Simmons lying alone in a cold white room blowing
his mind as he clutches his stamped . . . sealed . . .

Certificate of Death.

Stanley Stuart '75



Ann Oliver '75

A drunk old man
took my hand and
 twirled me round
 and round.
Laughing in my face
his alcoholed lips kissed
my cheek—
 those greasy pores
 a bit too close.
(I shut my eyes and
remembered, a train—
a drunk old man
different but the same.)
He stomped on my toe
and I awoke
wanting to scream
and kick him hard
and for once, open
those drunkened eyes.
I lied when I smiled
—and walked away.

Claiborne Gooch '75



Val Gordon '74

I woke up all of a sudden with my eyes wide. Was it a bad dream? Somebody was chasing me. "Moma?" I kind of whispered out loud. The sound of my own voice made me jump. Then the morning came clear and I saw the sheets all tangled around me. I was lying in bed and scared too. "Moma?" I called a little louder. What if the chase man was still here? I squinched down tight under the covers and closed my eyes and listened as hard as I could. No sounds at all. Not even the birds were awake yet. I breathed a little hard like people do when they're asleep. He'd go away if I lay still. He'd think I was asleep and get tired of waiting for me to wake up. I groaned some to make him think I was dreaming. All I could hear was me breathing. Everything was so still. He must be holding his breath to fool me.

Real slow I raised up my eyelids until my eyes were half open and half closed. He couldn't tell if I peeked. I didn't move anything else, not one little bit. I opened my eyes all the way. I couldn't see him anywhere. But I could see only a piece of my room without moving, and I couldn't even see that very well. It was still a little dark. Sure must be early. I rolled my eyes in great big circles and looked all around. I could see all the way to the ceiling and all the way to the floor and a little in between. I was lying on my side. I wiggled my toes to keep them from itching. It sure was dark all around, and a lot of shadows. I couldn't see any snakes. I tried real hard, I always tried real hard but I never could catch them. They loved dark corners and under things. When it got light they had to run away, but sometimes they stayed for the very last morning shadows. The bravest ones did. I shifted a little more, like I was asleep, but this time I moved my head so I could see better. They must have all skooted home, at least what I could see. Maybe they were under the bed. Nasty old snakes, they thought they could get me, but I knew better than to step down on the floor in the dark. Or even into shadows. Those snakes were just waiting for me. One night I got brave and crooked a tip of a finger out over the edge of my bed. I pulled it back quick before the snakes could see. They can see in the dark. Like rabbits. I had a rabbit once, but he died. Got all tangled up in the curtain cord and choked.

Something creaked and I froze up. Was that chase man really there? Or a burglar? Maybe he was over by the window watching me. Maybe he had one leg hanging in the room and creeping down real slow so I wouldn't hear him. I breathed deep again in case he thought I was awake. Another creak. Was he coming closer? I held my breath and watched him with my eyes squeezed shut so tight I could see red spots. Real slow I pulled some blanket up over my head and squinched deeper down into a knot. Nothing was showing except my nose. Maybe he'd think I'd disappeared, like magic. And I was a little girl witch that could poof turn him into a worm and squish him all up with my shoe. I scratched my nose, and opened my eyes, careful not to move. Even with my nose poked out, it was all hot underneath the covers. I poked my nose in and just left a peep-hole in the sheets. Now I could even smell how hot it was under there. I kept breathing deep, but soon the air got old. I made the peep-hole bigger but it didn't do any good. The old air just got older and older. But I had to keep still. I scratched my nose again real careful and listened. Birds! The birds were awake now. I could hear them singing. Grandmother knew a poem about a little girl listening to the birds in the morning. A little girl just like me she said. I could hear a whole family singing out there. Birds know when it's time to get up. God tells them. They don't need mothers. I wished God would tell my mother to wake up.

There was a quick rumble and I heard the heater air come out of the wall. It sounded mean. When I was a baby I use to think a dragon lived behind the wall and the noise was him breathing out fire. Maybe the noise would chase that man out. Or maybe he was gone already. It sure was old and hot under those covers. He'd probably been gone a long time. He was probably swinging way down the road somewhere chuckling to himself how he'd fooled me into thinking he was still in my room. It was so hot I was sweating. I rolled over on my other side real slow with the covers still up over my head. Then with my fingers, I inched the sheets down to my forehead. I listened real hard. Not a sound except those birds so I inched the sheets down to my eyes and peeked out over the edge . . . I couldn't see any old burglar anywhere. Unless he moved awful quick behind me. I waited a little, held real still, listened, then boom I flipped around ready to scratch his eyes out . . . No body there. And he couldn't have snuck away. He'd fooled me again.

I sat up a little and looked around good just in case. I was stuffy so I pushed the covers down to my knees. My night gown was all tangled up, so tight it squeezed. I wiggled up and down to fix it straight but that didn't help. I had to pull it way up then down to my feet to spread it out smooth. It had a ruffle around the bottom and tiny red cherries all over it. Moma said they were apples, but cherries taste better. When it was fixed right, I sat back on my elbows and looked around some. There weren't many shadows left in the room. I could see every thing just like I'd left it—except my bear. He'd crawled out of bed again last night. I leaned sideways and peeked over the edge of the bed. There he was standing on his head with his feet all which a way. Silly bear, why do you like to sleep on your head? I reached down to pick him up, looking first for snakes. Just in case. Dad said bears aren't use to beds like we are. I patted his poor head and then pulled up some sheets to tuck him in with. Go to sleep now. No more of your foolishness. I wished bears knew how to close their eyes. Dolls could.

I sure was getting hungry. Was it almost time to get up yet? I wished it was a stay-home day and I didn't have to get up for school. I hated those kids and I hated nasty old Gina. She knew which was her right hand for the flag and everybody laughed at me when my left hand was over my heart. Last week Johnny Walton threw up and we had to turn around and do the flag to the other side to not see the throw up. Everybody got their hands mixed up. Even Gina. Johnny Walton got to go home. I wished I could stay home for ever. God? Hey God? Don't wake Moma up. Make her forget again.

Just then I heard a step on the hall. Quick I lay down and closed my eyes tight. The steps got louder. I reached down and pulled the sheets up over me and curled my legs into a ball. Then my door creaked open. I closed my eyes fast.

"Rise and shine, little one. It's time for school." I didn't say anything. Just shifted a little and took a deep breath just like people do when they're dreaming. Moma called out my name, then louder. But I didn't move, I was so sound asleep. She said, "Lordy child, get out of that bed." I wiggled a little and groaned and opened one eye real slow, like I was just beginning to hear her and start waking up. She came over and shook me a little. I figured I better be woken up, before she started tickling me. That always made me mad. So real slow I started opening both eyes—"Oh good morning Moma."



Nancy Richards '73

Catching Fireflies

Catching fireflies from the dusk spread air
Forms melt as a passing life,
 greens fade to brown then black,
While children run from house to house
 clutching their glass bottles,
 waiting for a chance
To light up their night with fleeting gestures.
I still catch fireflies
 but know I'll never fly.

Jane McCutchen '73



Val Gordon '74



Sara Smith '75

The Spot of Wine

the spot of wine
 on the linen,
the only pain
 thats left from
the stiff swelling
 in your marrow and
my shaking
 pulsating
 presence.

the squeeming swiftness
 of unity
gone
 to another dawn,
a whole
 once again broken
by the coming
 of reality
brought
 forth
 uninvited.

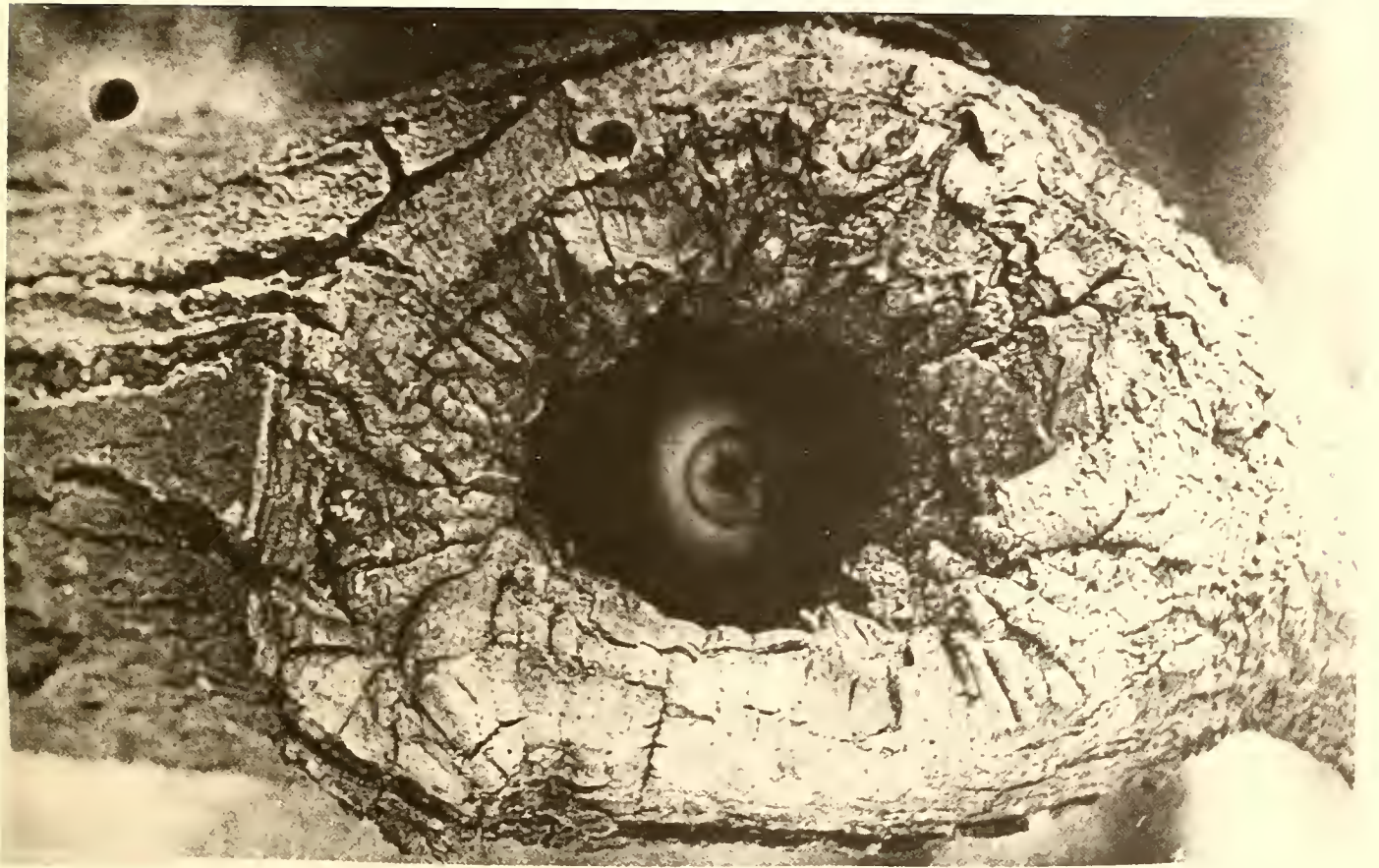
Robin Harmon '73

Softly, rain was drifting from the fog.
Cold was pressing in like fear,
Pulling muscles taut around me
And drawing me more tightly in.

I looked up from tracing pebbles
In the sidewalk to see someone
Coming, carried, like a wave by its tide
Toward an incidental shore. And
Though there was a slight exchange of pebbles,
In a glance, the tide reclaimed its wave;
The moistened surface of the
Beach drew tightly over sands beneath it.

As I swallowed and began to hum,
My tongue vibrated warmth into
The inside of my mouth, and a familiar
Song shook off the cold. And still
The rain was drifting softly from the fog.

Sherry Buttrick '75



Nancy Blackwell '74

A Promise

Someday I will dragon your tower,
I will come to your walls covered with ivy
(or is it ivory?)
I will call up to you, settling for silence no longer.
I will lure you from your lair
If I must golden-song you
To the point of fascination,
Lure you with curious fingers
That pluck at your mind as if you were a lute
To be played by me
Calling up to you.
What will you do
When I set fire to your silken heels?
Will you throw roses down to me?
I will burn them too;
No, you must bring them down yourself,
And even then I can not promise to be gentle.
I have lived alone in captivity too long for that.

Kathy Orr '75



brambler

FALL — 1973

Brambler

Sweet Briar College
Sweet Briar, Virginia

3. Illona Petrovits
4. Wendy White
5. Elinor Plowden
6. Nursat Aygen
12. Valerie Gordon
13. Anonymous
14. Boyd Zenner
16. Ernest P. Edwards
17. Boyd Zenner
19. Betsy Banks
23. Valerie Gordon
24. Anonymous
25. Kathy Sue Orr
26. Lesley Vincent
27. Lesley Vincent



Dingle Bay

Dublin, and in the bus
station that red dressed and cheeked blonde
child, she crawls across the floor
sliding her small hands through the dirt film
and her knees and red hem
leaving a track behind her like a mop—
one hand reaches the door handle slightly
blackened, the other in a fist
rubs her blue and red—
rimmed eyes.

and her mouth closes around the handle
end and sucks, and sucks, and
sucking her eyes touch all
the room, that woman, stranger
obese with breasts to her waist, mother
discarding a bit of wrapper to the floor
and pushing the hard red candy between her
thin lips, after it three fingers
one at a time

and the spring broken
through the red plastic on the bench beneath
me makes itself more
sharply felt,

jabbing deeper now
deeper into my thigh, piercing
me, and
I am sure I will become

one pool of blood
redyeing

the red plastic
as the air turns thick and I
think my throat will not
choke
down
even one more breath

but it does (of course)
and I get to the water
blue, cold, Dingle Bay
flashes at me the sun

broken
in way too many pieces
like me.



It was going to be a sunny day. I could tell that from where I lay for I could see a patch of sunlight trying to sneak into the room. The blazing sun was kept out only by the two pins which strained to close the two pieces of cloth together. I wait for that patch of sunlight religiously every morning. It is no fun going to the sea shore when there are clouds in the sky. Even the tiniest cloud closes the sun. I wait patiently for the bright reappearance before I dive into the inviting waters of the Marmara sea. I seldom have the courage to jump into the water. I rather walk into the sea and grow used to the water as it slowly wets and chills my whole body. The ocean is quite shallow near the shore and it is so clear that I can spot the crabs before they grab my feet. When I am in the sea I have a terrible habit of opening my eyes under the water. I know what is going on above me, the azure sky, the sun, a few small clouds scattered here and there. It is usually the same except in stormy weather and that is so rare here, but what is going on in the sea itself? I like to know. The sea along the shore of this village is not mossy in most parts. Yes, in Kumgurgaz one feels that counting the bits of sand beneath your feet is not impossible in such clear water. I love to observe the almost microscopic fish which swim in schools under your arms and legs, regardless of your mighty existence.

I hate to swim in mossy water. The shore of the mosque is mossy. There are plenty of rocks too. The mosque of the village is right on the shore and rises calmly to the sky. Its only minarette pointing to the one and only God in heaven. They have rebuilt the wall between the mosque and the sea this summer, higher and stronger this time. The purpose of the wall is not only to keep the mosque from being eaten away in the winter by violent waves, a violence long accumulated which is camouflaged these summer days beneath the smooth surface of the waters, but it is designed to protect the people in the mosque. While they are doing their "namaz" five times a day, rising up and kneeling on the precious antique praying rugs they must not see the bare people, women and girls in their bathing suits who might be sun bathing in the shadow of the minarette or taking a walk along the shore. They must renew their abolution, washing their hands and feet and faces if they see a bare woman.

Every summer I find the shore of the mosque rockier and more mossy than the last. I used to swim in front of the mosque four years ago. Now? God forbid it! The dark green moss, the seaweed and the linchen scare me. I don't quite know why it frightens me so to feel them twining, about my legs.

The fishers of the village have built their tent between the protective wall of the mosque and the sea. It can hardly be called a tent. Pieces of rags and horse cloth are pieced together to form a covering. I could see too, beneath it, a box which at some time must have held fruit that was sold on the highway and other odd boxes. I should think they would be tables and chairs for them and yet I always see them sitting on the rocks. When I go to buy some fish I try to peek inside and although I can see some things resembling beds I can see no quilts. They must sleep with their clothes and jackets on. There are four men and a teen-age boy. I do not see how they all can fit together in such a small tent and I wonder if perhaps they ever sleep in their boats. How would it feel to sleep there, rocking and listening to the rippling of the sea as smooth and without wrinkles as a newly ironed sheet. But the water is not dead no matter how silent. It is teeming with life under its calm surface. Lying in that boat you would know the sea was alive for you would feel the slightest movement, the minutest shifting. Yet it would be frightening to go out in the sea at night for even when your eyes were opened it would be dark below. It would be impossible to see the sea weeds and the linchen and whatever else may be there at night, and one would feel quite helpless rocking in the darkness.

When I swim in front of the mosque even in the daytime I feel that helpless. I am all alone. The sea is unfriendly with disguised hostility below its waters, with weeds and linchen. I feel desperate. I cannot lower my feet to the bottom which is interwoven with the strange slimy plants. The mosque is so close and yet so much stands between. It reminds me of the spiritual force above me and all mankind and yet when I am in the sea I find no comfort there. I am helpless against the dark, mysterious plants under me, waiting for the appropriate moment when they can pull me down into their depths and swallow me up. I will not swim there in front of the

mosque. Nothing can make me swim where I cannot see the tiniest details of what is dwelling beneath me in this sea, which as far as I can see has no end. It seems all powerful, and I, so insignificant and pitiful, am at its mercy. Even the minarette is no comfort, no guarantee against the sea.

I should be far more fearful of swimming at night but some find it most enjoyable to swim after it has grown dark. I hear that Husam's sisters swim at night. He and his family live all year in Kumburgaz which has only recently become a summer resort for families like my own who hope to escape the heat of the city. Husam has been educated and those of the village take great pride in him. His father is considered to be one of the richest in the village but strangely enough this has not made him 'modern'. I strongly doubt that his daughters swim at night because of the warmness of the sea or for the pleasure of swimming at night. I think they bathe at night so that no one can see them for honor and virtue are key virtues in the life of the village and are the main subjects of the afternoon teas and chats around the drinking fountain.

I can see the wife of our landlord on the sofa, her legs crossed, pointing to the house of the neighbor across the dirt road.

"They are a disgrace to the whole village. Just the other night I saw men jumping out of the window twice and Layla saw another man while I was in the kitchen. That's why her son-in-law divorced her daughter. Do you see that little room sticking out of the side of the house? He jumped into the road from the window there and disappeared behind the fountain . . . Their mother is the teacher of them all. I pity her poor henpecked husband. He is so quiet. He never looks up. He is ashamed to face the village. They talk about his wife and three daughters even in Silivri."

"And in Esenler too" added Sema, the oldest of the landlord's daughters who is on the dangerous borderline of becoming twenty-five soon.

"Yes, yes, they talk about them everywhere." Rahide Hanim was most eager to continue with her story. This time it was I who interrupted her.

"Why is it that he does nothing about his wife's disloyalty and his daughter's . . ."

A loud laugh answered me.

"Poor man, he tried." her laughter begins to die. "Quite a few times he tried. Everytime he ended up in the street. His wife and his daughters take his clothes away, give him a good spanking and throw him out into the street."

When she finished speaking, Rahide Hanim, smoothed her richly embroidered kerchief. She has had her scarf on for a long time for she will perform her "namaz" soon. It is almost four o'clock and the hodja will soon come to call out the "ezan". He will come out on the balcony of the minarette to call God's name and to invite the moslems to worship.

"As you can see these women are a unfortunate people to have about. I know so much more about them but my good manners prevent me from repeating any of it. She cast a spell on her husband to make him marry her. Yes, of course she is beautiful. I accept that. Her daughters are beautiful. I always speak the truth. I know the truth and I only speak the truth, but she was older than he was. With her talent in witchcraft she cast a spell on him so that he would marry her in spite of her age. She is older than I am too. She will not admit that she is older but I know the truth. I only tell the truth and what I do not say is only what my good manners prevent me from repeating."

"Mother it is almost your "namaz" time. Shall I bring your praying rug?"

After Layla left the room to get the praying rug her mother turned to me and said, "If one does not have God's love in the heart one can become a witch like Rahide Hanim and her daughters."

While I was remembering all these things I had forgotten the sun and I suddenly realized that it had squeezed between the part in the curtains and had filled my room. It was going to be a sunny day and I was so glad. I reach across to a large pile of clothes and books on the chair for on top of them rest my glasses and watch. It is only 7 o'clock but since today is sunday it will soon be quite crowded. Crowded is not the word to describe week-ends in Kumburgaz. People rush into the village mostly from Istanbul. They come very early in the morning on sundays and do not leave until late evening. While taking walks in the late afternoon or

shopping from a tent store I see long lines of people waiting for buses back to Istanbul. Often the busses arrive full, mostly filled in Silivri, another resort along the shores of Marmara.

I cannot stay in bed any longer and I want so much to enjoy the beach before these great crowds come. I can hear Lale, the landlord's twenty-one year old daughter singing in the kitchen. There is only a door between their part of the house and ours. Lale must be doing the dishes from last night. We came home late last night from the movies. It was midnight but we were not sleepy at all. We took our tea pots and a tray full of glasses to the shore. We had our bedtime hot tea on the cold sand, watching the reflections of the moon on the calm water. Lale must have left the dishes for the morning. It was late when we returned from the beach.

I could hear no other noise but the dishes in water when I left the house. I had my bikini, my towel dress and my hat on and I carried my dark glasses, blanket and radio. I forgot nothing. I passes the village fountain and the drinking basin and I see that the water supply has been cut. I turned right and found Husam in front of Murat's grocery store watching the sea.

"Good morning Husam."

"Good morning Nur. How are you this morning?"

"Fine thanks. This is going to be a really pretty day. There is not a cloud in the sky."

"Yes it will be a fine day. Lots of people will be coming and Murat will make a lot of money this Sunday. I thought he might need some help in the store."

"Won't you swim today?"

"I don't enjoy swimming when it is too crowded. I'd rather help Murat. The busses are coming full from Istanbul. Do you see that boy in the blue bathing suit over there?"

I looked in that direction.

"You mean the tall one?"

"Yes, he came to buy a case of coke a while ago and he said the police stopped their bus a half hour after they left Istanbul. The bus was full and there were about twenty people standing in the aisles. The driver asked those in the aisles to kneel down when he saw the police approaching but it was too late. You know that that is illegal. The extra passengers were asked to wait for the

next bus . . .

I did not hear Husam anymore. I pretended to listen and to be looking at the sea. The boy in the blue swimming suit was very handsome.

". . . Busses and mini-busses are pouring in today. I should help Murat. I may jump into the water and swim for awhile if I get too hot."

"Are these boys here only for the day Husam?"

"I am not sure but the boy in the blue suit was telling me that he is from Ankara. His parents rented one of our houses on the shore a month ago. I think he will stay with his parents more than a day."

"O.K. Husam, I won't keep you from helping Murat.

Young village men always hung around Murat's store. Sometimes they helped Murat but more often they sat on the wooden fruit boxes in front of the store drinking beer or coke while they played "tavla" or simply watched the people pass by. The store is a convenient place to meet girl friends too. The girl comes in to buy groceries and a boy will go behind the counter and help Murat with the customer even tho Murat may not be busy at the time. Murat understands and because he understands he always has extra help without paying a kurus.

I walked toward the mosque. The boy in the blue swimming suit was standing on the wall. He was really tall. His hair was long but not quite touching his shoulders like a girl. It was just the right length. He was facing the sea. I could not see his face.

On the right of the mosque under the shadow of the few trees a family was sitting on the sheets that they had spread. They were listening to the music from their rather old record player. I passed them. Bahar was in front of her house reading a book. I passed her. I did not want to get involved in a long conversation with her. I took a few steps down to the beach. I took off my dress, made a pillow of it and lay on my back not forgetting to cover my face with my hat. The sun is so strong . . .

"Nur, get up!" I had almost fallen asleep under the sun. The girl I had avoided earlier, Bahar, was at my side.

"Let's go Nur!"

"What do you mean let's go? What is going on?"

She is pointing to the shore of the mosque. A big crowd had gathered there. There was no one left around me. All had gone to join the crowd.

"Let's go Nur. Let's go and see what is happening there!"

"How little these people are. When they see a crowd they all run and make the crowd bigger and bigger. Why don't they mind their own business? Just because they have nothing better to do than to read Fotoroman, play cards or lie in the sun does not make what is going on over there, their business. I am hot. I want to go in the sea for a while."

"O.K. I will wait for you but be quick."

The sand was very hot. I could not put my feet on it. I practically hopped all the way to the sea. I dived into the water. The sea was so calm, so clear blue today. The water was also quite warm from the bright sun. The sea was so obedient today. I swam until I grew weary and then lay on my back with my head towards the shore and my eyes closed.

"Nur, Nur!"

Bahar was shouting to me at the top of her voice and waving her arms. I lowered my feet and they touched the sand. I began walking in the water. Bahar was jumping up and down on the beach. I swam the rest of the way to the shore.

"Somebody has drowned."

I turned around and looked at the sea, so calm, so smooth. Not the tiniest wave. What more there were all kinds of boats rowing very close to the beach along the shore.

"Are you kidding? Look at the sea. There is not a single wave."

"Oh yes he is drowned . . . he is over there . . . on the wall . . . I saw him."

I was stunned. I looked at Bahar. She was not kidding or lying. I looked at the volume of water that had pleased me so much a few moments before. It was lying.

She pulled me to the crowd in front of the mosque. They were bare people, bored people.

"They said he's seventeen."

"So young . . ."

"He is student in an American highschool."

"Why doesn't someone help him. Why are you all

standing around? Fetch a Doctor! Somebody breathe into his lungs!" I was screaming and waving at the crowd and suddenly they parted a bit and I saw him. The blue swimming suit. His body had begun to turn blue. His back had been turned to me as I went down the beach. I had wanted to see his face but not like this . . . his handsome face, blue and his long eyelashes plastered to his face.

Seeing Husam I shook his arm, "he is not dead, is he?"

"Calm down. Don't worry. He is not dead."

Husam took me away from the boy.

"I was in front of the store," he said, "He caught my eye. I thought he was struggling in the water. It looked very unusual, very peculiar. I ran to the beach and immediately dived into the water. I dragged him to the shore . . . it was hard.

"But he won't die, will he?"

"He was unconscious when I brought him to the shore."

"But they can breathe into his lungs and save him."

"He has swallowed a lot of water, Nur."

"They can turn him upside down and shake him and pour the water out again. Then he will open his eyes. I want to know him."

The taxi arrived that was to take him to the hospital. One of the fisherman held him from under the arms and another held his legs. His arms and legs hung loosely like empty bags as they carried him into the taxi. His head was tilted back. I moved towards the taxi and I saw his eye lashes stir and his eyes open a little. He looked at me, yes, he looked at me through his half opened lids. "I will pray for you", I whispered. "I will be seeing you on the beach if not tomorrow then the day after tomorrow."

I looked up and saw the minarette pointing to the one and only God in heaven. I will pray for you. You will come. I saw the hodja's head in the balcony of the minarette. It must be twelve o'clock already. The sun was just above the heads. Hot, it is time for the noon "namaz". The hodja faced Mecca and began the "ezan". The deep voice through the loud speaker exploded into the air. The women in bathing suits looked around. They had come from other parts of the shore to see the boy.

They had run in their bathing suits. They had nothing to wrap about themselves. I quickly wrapped my towel around me. The people quickly began to disperse. There had been some excitement brought to their day but it was over.

"Allah is almighty, Allah is almighty". The deep voice of the hodja filled my soul. "Help the boy! I pray, help him."

"You know Husam, I saw him breathe. He even opened his eyes a little bit as they carried him away in the taxi."

Husam did not answer.

"What do you mean he was breathing? The voice came from the fisherman without a leg. He had lost it while fishing illegally with dynamite. "He is as dead as a fish on land. Didn't you notice that he was blue?"

"But I saw him breathe. I tell you I saw him breathe! He lifted his eyelashes."

"Nonsense" the dry voice continued. "We didn't tell his relatives that he was already dead. Let them find out at the hospital."

He turned then and disappeared into the tent, hopping on one leg.

I turned around, Husam lowered his eyes to the sand. I stared at him for a long time.

"But why? The shore is very shallow here. He was so near?"

"You know Nur", Husam began, "they construct many buildings here, the hotels, the motels, you know. They build them constantly. They need sand for construction. No one will let them take sand from the beach. They are supposed to take the sand from the sea, far from the shore. Well, they did not. Last winter they took trucks full of sand from there."

I looked up, He was pointing to spot in the calm smooth water in front of the mosque, not far from the shore.

"A well was formed there in the sea, a rather deep one. The water pulls you down into the well. You know how it goes down and around twisting and spiralling . . . I took him out of the well and as I dragged him back with me I realized how easily he could have touched the bottom. If he had only moved his arms and legs just a little bit, but from where I stood at the shore I could see

that he was panicking and though I ran as fast as I could I knew that he would not make it. If he had only fought the spiral. Its strength is not so great, but he just flailed his arms and legs in wild wavings, and I knew he was lost."

"I think I want to go home Husam. I can't bear to be here any longer."

Later I took the table and a few chairs out in front of the house. A long slanting roof and two trees cast enough shade there for us to enjoy our tea in the late afternoon. The best thing to do in this hot weather would be to cool off in the sea but after what had happened in the morning that was last thing that we wanted to do. My mother was knitting and my sisters were talking with Lale who was bent from the waist over their balcony with a glass of tea in her hand.

"Hey Nur!"

I looked up and it was Lale pointing to Susan and her daughter Arzu who was said to excel her mother in blackening the virtuous name of the Kamburgaz village. They were coming from the village with their baskets full.

"She does a better job of spanking her husband and throwing him out of the house than her sister, whenever he tries to prove his manhood by telling them what to do. Last week he found the courage to say that his daughter should not wear a bikini. He spent the night out in the barn."

Lale winked at me and disappeared. Arzu is a beautiful girl with long blond hair, a thin graceful body and big green eyes. Perhaps she will get as plump as her mother when she gets older.

"Hey neighbor!" my mother called to them. She liked to chat with the village women. "Won't you have tea with us?" She enjoyed listening to both of the opposing rivals of the village and learn the latest in village affairs. I could not interest myself in them. I wished that I had never risen and gone down to the beach. I wished that the tiny patch of light that I religiously waited for each morning had not snuck in through the curtains. I wished it had been a miserable day with rain and storm so that no one would have dared swim.

"We were going to my Aunt's" giggled Arzu. She was one of the most liberated girls of the village who drank

and smoked out in the open and did not swim at night like Husam's sisters but during the day and not in an old cotton dress but in a bathing suit. Her mother was an honorable woman who never went out without her hair covered or without a coat over her dress. The mother, Suzan had a dark blue summer coat over her dress. They both were wearing the bottom parts of their faded pajamas. The women and girl wore these pajamas to protect their legs while they worked in the fields especially from the gumbo which makes the legs itch very badly. Gul, my sister, went up the Lale's to fetch two more chairs for our guests. I went into the kitchen to fill two glasses with hot tea. These women talk a lot and I was not in the mood to listen to their stories and so I tried to lengthen my stay in the kitchen. I could see them from where I stood for there was only a light curtain hanging in the doorway. I could hear them talking.

"It must be hard to work in the fields all day in such hot weather." I could hear my mother say.

"We did not work all day" Susan answered.

"We did not work this morning", her daughter Arzu continued. "We road in Ayse's husband's boat along the shore all morning. We had fun." I could see from behind the curtain that her eyes were shining. Susan gave her daughter a mean look which meant, "Shut up! I am going to do the talking."

"Me, Azru and two other women and Ayse were out in the boat. You know Ayse don't you? She is pregnant."

My mother nodded.

"And today while we were out a stupid boy tried to get into our boat, even though he could see that we were all women in the boat."

The tea pot almost fell out of my hands.

"Yes, he did, he did." Arzu was eager to get on with the story.

"You shut up when your mother is talking! . . . We were rowing in front of the mosque. There were three boys swimming and this one was trying to get our attention.

"He had a blue suit on" Arzu interrupted. "I was rowing the boat. He tried to get into the boat while I was passing him."

"That's right! He really tried to get in. There was not a single man in the boat. We were all women. How

could we take him in? Everyone was on the shore. What would they think of us, if we took a half nude man into our boat?"

I ran out of the kitchen. "How could you!" I screamed, and not even extend him an oar. My mother put her hand on my arm to silence me. Her look said "You can not reason with these people, Nur, they are the worst in the village.

"Nur, bring out the tea," she said.

A brief silence followed me into the kitchen. I heard Susan's voice as I poured the hot tea from the kettle into the glasses.

"He tried very hard to hang onto the boat. I hope no one saw him try to get in. We were very close to the shore they must have seen him. They will talk. I know they will. We are virtuous women. I never go out without a coat or a scarf. I defended my honor. I took an oar out from its place and hit that boy on the hands, wretched boy, he wouldn't let go. That did it. he finally let go. Now they can't talk about us."

"Nur what happened to the tea?" My mother called.

The glasses were filled with the red tea, as red as rabbit blood. I spat a little into both of the glasses, put them on the shiny silver tray and carried them out to our guests.



In My Mother's House

It has always been her house, always
Though its face has changed three times in my memory
(Once,
It was that glass and stucco gleam in the barren mountains
Which she hated with all the energy of her soul:
even then it was her step the floors molded to; the quick kiss
Of narrow, naked white feet on parquet.)

As part of her, I was once tolerated by the rooms
In which I lived and moved, dreamy and obedient; unformed . . .
I loved the corners where her word and footstep echoes gathered
Like some venerable dust:
In her absences I touched her everywhere.

Later,

Growing older and apart somehow, I became an intruder: she,
Hardening into bitterness slowly, did not forgive the trespasses
But set her world against me, drawing up its walls and roof
Around her like a cocoon until I rattled in the tense rooms
And shrank from the bleakness. The house became her spy,
Tracking my restless night movements through the upper halls
With warning creaks and whines until she would appear
Implacable in a white nightgown, at the foot of the stairs. My room—
Even my room, in the end, was hers: unlockable traitor, it drew back
coldly

From my pictures, my books; from my uneasy sleeping self . . .

And tonight,

A visitor from elsewhere, I read quietly in the living room
Aching with tension and too much light, and decide this is the last time
That I will ever come back here. The noises of the night die gradually –
They are sleeping, this family – and in the stillness
My flipping pages echo hollowly, guiltily. I close the book and rise.
And shut the lights out, one by one. At the bottom of the stairs I stop,
Turning for just a moment to look; then slowly climb the wooden steps:
In the sullen silence around me my mother's house watches grimly,

waiting.

River Fear

I.

For twenty years in my sight and memory the river has moved
In just this way, beneath the silvered bridge boards,
Splintery and half-gutted with rot (a frail spine still
Suspended above the smoky ripples), winding its way
Sullenly shadowed, through the treacherous bottom land
Where black limbs snarl above, roots twine below
In a tangle of lightless wood and silent soaked grasses.
In the early days, a small child, I wept
Even in crossing the dim water: the currents
Uncrested by all but the most occasional dart of sunlight,
Seemed to tell the coming of a blindness, or some death. I could not swim
there.

In those long summers, though the heat would drive us—
Sweating cousins and aunts—out of that white-washed Southern town
And down to the hissing banks. I could not tell them
How the water crawled up my legs on entering, how the wild weeds
And sunken logs sucked at me from underneath
While I screamed and thrashed and balanced on the sluggish surface:
Trolls beneath the bridge then would have been a relief, a named fear.

II.

Late night torments at Grandmother's. I would toss damply
Alone in the big bed (on nights when the long dead ladies and gentlemen
Stared down too grimly from their frames on the walls)
And hear a sound of secret rushes, of dark water rolling,
Unwatched, in the hidden caves and hollows of its bed;
Sluggish no longer, ravenous, demanding sacrifice.
All knew such tales by heart:
Moccasins which slipped quietly from low limbs into boats;
Negro baptisms where sinners were dunked and seen no more;
Straying children gulped up and swallowed by the current.
Sleep-mad, I could feel the ruinous coils of water on my own body,
See the grim white portrait-faces floating in the unlit depths
Like so many long-ago book-pressed magnolia blossoms:
In a frenzy I sobbed as the river rose, snarling
And leapt in a flood of shadow up the polished staircase.

III.

A grown woman, I stand on the bank with my cousins
Laughing and talking as the river muscles its way past
Beneath the ancient bridge, arrowing out in ripples
The color of a thousand drowned Negroes. The water, they tell me,
Is still clean — and drink cupped handsful to prove it.
I smile but do not drink: I do not even dip
One bare foot in the stream, as I might have done in some other place.
Are you still afraid of this old river? they laugh
And then I laugh too and shake my head: but I am lying, lying,
For as long as I live I will cringe from those shadowed banks,
Hate this snake-bearer, this black, twisting vein of water
Whose venomous currents rush darkly in my chest and belly
As they did from the very first, because it is my face too
That I see floating palely in those dim and silent depths
Drowned,
Stopped,
Unreachable forever.



Birds of Prey

From where I stand on the mountainside they are the only moving things:
The great birds who hang suspended, drifting gently
Through the pale air above the valley, circling
With dipped wings in some secret hunters' gyre toward earth.
Dark-bodied, they are discernible only as floating arches, shadows
Curved to air currents like liquid arrows: sharpness
Of beak and talon and eye must be guessed at
As cruelties obscured by distance. In this afternoon's silence
Of shadowed ridges and fading sun there is no possibility
Of killer's dive; of animal death shriek: sensation here
Is of no such violent order, and so
The quarry-watchers glide on, unhurried,
Discreetly poised above the tiny world
Of sound and motion. Watched, they droop elegantly in the blue void,
Give no sign: far below, the marked entrails throb
Beneath their fur or feathers; await in ignorance
Their destruction.

ROSE WALL

The trees were so tall. They were taller than my grandmother. They must have lived oh so much longer than she had. They were straight up trees. Not at all the kind that gave you a leg up into their branches, but they reached like arrows pointing into the sky. These were secret trees. Not even squirrels knew what lay in their limbs. Some days when it was still and quiet all around, they would shiver up high and whisper dark secrets to one another. You could just barely hear them if you stopped and listened so carefully. But it was frightening to stand under them and look up their ice-black bodies into their limbs matted against the sky. . . . But there was no sky there. Only knots of twisted needles and pine cones that shook down sometimes to cover the front yard. I didn't play under them. But sometimes I just had to go look; if only for a few minutes before I turned and fled back to my grandmother's house, to the breakfast room, where the sunshine was and you could see the sky if you looked out the window.

It was Wednesday. And I had drunk all my milk for breakfast even though the glass was hot and sticky with jelly finger prints. And I had wiped my mouth with my sticky napkin and run to fetch Grandfather's paper from the sunporch. Now I was sitting with my napkin back in my lap and looking through the glass table at Grandfather's shoes that twinkled against the white floor. I didn't know why I was on a visit to Grandmother's house on a school day. Fred Gilmer was giving a birthday party instead of rest period today, but I'd had to get in the car last night and go all the way to Grandmother's house instead. I'd wished on three state lines that I could go back to Georgia, but it hadn't worked at all. I was still at Grandmother's house and Fred Gilmer was giving my chocolate cupcake to somebody else.

Grandmother came and sat down with another plate of muffins. She scooted her chair in so quietly and passed the plate to Grandfather. I could see her eyes cutting over to look at my milk glass and my spread out scrambled eggs. I picked up my fork quickly and sat up straight to eat. It was best to sit up straight because then you could see and talk to everybody at the table. No body was looking at me anyway. Grandfather

was eating, and my mother's place was all set but she wasn't there. I didn't want to talk to anybody else or sit up straight either. But I had to. I ate some egg and looked all around.

Grandmother had a pink bathrobe and caked eyes that drooped underneath. Her hair was tired and she had a mouth that blared out red from her face and came off onto coffee cup rims. She had a coffee cup in her hand now and she was staring out over the edge of it, past Grandfather's ear into the side yard. I could look out from where I sat too. The window was so big I could see all of the sky and the ground where the blue jays were eating. I could see my rose wall too, part of it anyway. Nobody else could because it was hidden away behind the tree branches. It was a secret. There were a lot of blue jays out with pointed heads and wings that spread out blue. They were so beautiful. Grandmother wasn't looking at them though. She wasn't looking at anything, and neither was Grandfather. But then she cleared her throat and started talking. Her voice was low down.

"I don't think she's going to get up. I've called her three times now."

I watched out at the sky.

"We'll have to pull her out of this. She can't be allowed to just fold up. If she's going to come back to this house . . ."

A squirrel was on the bird feeder, his cheeks all puffed out. All the birds had flown away but I could still see the sky all blue and sparkley. I picked up a muffin from the plate and put it straight into my mouth. Grandmother kept right on talking, almost whispering.

"I could have told you this would happen. The child never should have left this house at eighteen. Ridiculous. She's just lucky her old room is still waiting for her."

Grandmother wasn't looking at Grandfather but I thought she was talking to him. She was looking right past his ear to the outside. And Grandfather wasn't looking at anything but he was chewing on his muffin and strawberry jam. He liked strawberry jam more than anything. I liked blue jam and blue jays. I couldn't help it. There were jays back on the feed wall now flashing

their wings. I watched two of them pecking at the same pile of seed. How could they eat like that?

Grandmother's voice was getting louder, like she was getting mad or something. I wasn't doing anything wrong was I? I'd drunk all my sticky milk for breakfast and gone to get Grandfather's paper from the sun-porch, even though he wasn't reading it. He wasn't doing any thing. Not even eating. He had his elbows on the table with his chin setting in his hands. You aren't suppose to do that at Grandmother's house. But he was doing it anyway. I wouldn't.

"She can't just stay in bed. I won't allow it in my house.

She has to have her breakfast, we don't have time for this foolishness."

"I'll get her." Grandfather shoved back his chair with a jerk, that made me jump. He stood up quick, knocking the table and sloshing the coffee out of the cups. I watched his black shoes click against the floor. I watched them until they stepped onto the edge of the dining room carpet and disappeared. They were going to my mother and they were going to shake her out of bed so she could have a muffin and drink up all her milk for breakfast.

I could hear Grandfather pushing up the stairs to my mother's pink room. Grandmother could hear him too, I knew she was listening. I don't know how I could tell though because she was still looking at that same spot past Grandfather's ear, except Grandfather wasn't there anymore. He was in my mother's pink room. Upstairs. Where I couldn't hear.

"I don't know where you'll live now Sarah."

"Could I have another muffin please Grandmother?" She looked at me frowning.

"Eat those eggs."

I didn't pick up my fork, but she didn't say anything. She just kept looking out. Then we both heard creaking on the stairs and we both listened to it all the way down. I tried to count how many feet were there. Maybe Grandmother did too. We listened to them stepping across the dining room rug and then there were Grandfather's shoes on the breakfast room floor, and there was Grandfather with my mother walking behind him. They both stopped for a second to look at us, then Grand-

father went to his seat and picked up his paper that I'd brought him. He opened to the middle and made a tent around his face, and I couldn't even see if he was eating his muffin or not. My mother sat at her empty place. She looked across at me and Grandmother got up and went into the kitchen. Her pink bathrobe trailed along the floor behind her.

My mother was all sleepy in her bathrobe. It was shiny blue just like the sky, and when we were home in Georgia, she let me wear it sometimes. I could wrap all up in it four times around and it smelled warm and powder blue. Sometimes I pretended like I was a sky fairy. But it didn't look like a sky fairy now. It was wrinkled and all twisted around my mother the wrong way and one of the buttons was open with her nightgown showing through. She put her elbow on the table and rested her forehead in her hand. I knew better than that. Grandmother came back in with cold eggs. She put them in front of my mother and scooted her own chair in so quietly. My mother didn't sit up straight and she didn't pick up her fork. She raked her fingers through her curly hair and didn't look anything. Neither did Grandmother.

"This household gets up at nine o'clock every morning, and eats a good breakfast."

Grandmother's voice was low and smooth. I'd thought she was talking to my mother but my mother didn't look up at her or even move. I knew she wasn't talking to me. Grandfather's paper rattled and Grandmother looked over her coffee cup again. I'd eaten too many muffins and my stomach was all stuffed up. I watched out at the jays and didn't listen to the grown-up talking. It was all low and smooth. Then something clanked down on the glass and my mother stood up and Grandfather's paper crumpled down. I looked back out. Then my mother wasn't sitting at the table at all. I could see her empty place out of the corner of my eye, but I didn't know where she was. Nobody was talking or moving or anything.

Then I was kind of standing up in front of my chair saying "excuse me please, Grandmother." And taking my plate with both hands to the kitchen. Grandmother was talking to me I think but I couldn't hear what she said. I put my egg plate on the counter and turned back the heavy bolt on the back door to go outside. Grandmother's

chair scraped harshly against the floor and I pulled open the door and ran down three back steps to the walkway. I heard the door slam shut behind me. The noise was a bang that made me run across the driveway past the garage and the servants house. I wanted to find my rose wall. It was in the side yard, but I had to creep around the back to it. What if Grandmother saw me. Would she be mad? If she was sitting at the breakfast table, she'd see me through the window and maybe come after me. Would she? I didn't want her to see me, or where the rose wall was. Not at all. I didn't eat all my eggs, and I wanted to hide.

Grandmother's back yard was big and deep. After the garage and servants house, it stretched way back in low trees and tangled thorns. There was an old play house that my mother used to play in when she was as old as me. It was covered with vines inside and out and the floor was broken through. Why would anybody want to build a play house over a deep hole? And why would anybody smash in a play house? That's what it looked like, like somebody had taken an ax to it a long long time ago. Now it had old pieces of metal in it that Grandmother said were parts of a car that my Uncle Jimmy had put there before he died. She didn't know why. They were black and rusted and covered with vines. She said the floor had broken through because the parts were so heavy, they'd fallen right through and were laying on the bottom of the hole. But I didn't think that hole had any bottom. It was too dark and the broken floor boards around it were too ragged and old. I tiptoed past it now and around the clothes line that was strung up and rotten behind the servants' house. There used to be ladys that lived in the servant's house who put the bath towels on the line with clothes pins for the sun to dry. But there wasn't any sun back here anymore. Or sky either. It was all tangled but by the vines and the thorns and all. Maybe I'd get all tangled out there too if I stayed long enough. Or get stuck down that hole with the metal car parts. I hated the back yard. I just couldn't stay in the tangles. My rose wall was around the corner and I didn't care if Grandmother saw me run to it. Maybe she'd forget where it was, or maybe she wouldn't. I didn't care. But I just had to hide there. I started walking toward it. If I got a running start I could jump all the way to the top of it without climbing.

I reached the edge of the house. I had to run in front of the breakfast room window to get to it now. Grandmother would see me. I didn't care. I broke into a run and streaked across the open lawn making the blue jays scatter. I saw the wall come closer to me. I threw out my hands, caught them on the top of the wall and sprang upwards. I landed with a jolt on the rough stone and was still, my lungs heaving in and out. I listened to them and looked down at my hands scraped with white marks from the stone.

I was up high and looking down to the rotted leaves and sticks below me. The rose wall was my secret place and it was my friend in Grandmother's yard that let me see the sky from on top of it. And I could see the blue jays that fed on the open lawn in front of me, and I could see the breakfast room window that stretched from ceiling to floor and had sunshine streaming into it. There was sunshine on the wall too and even in the cool September air, I could feel it on my face, warm and pale. I moved closer to the tree near the wall and leaned up against it. My back was bigger than its trunk, but it had a curved spot that I fitted into just right. I put my head back and watched all around me. The Blue.

I didn't know where my mother was, but I knew she wasn't in the breakfast room. Nobody was. Because I could see right into it and it was yellow and empty. Grandmother was probably upstairs getting on all her girdles. And Grandfather was probably on the sunporch with his magnifying glass and that newspaper I'd brought him. I drank all my milk for breakfast this morning. My mother didn't though. She'd forgotten. And she'd forgotten to put the ribbon in her hair for Grandmother. It was a brown ribbon, and my mother said she'd had that ribbon for a long long time. I asked her if it was as long as the play house. I asked her twice. I didn't wear ribbons in my hair, and neither did my mother except when she came to Grandmother's house, but she forgot today. Maybe that was why she stood up and made her plate clatter. And maybe that was why Grandfather's paper had rattled and Grandmother had looked over her coffee cup. I wanted to go find my mother and ask her if that was why and ask her to come sit with me on my secret rose wall where Grandmother couldn't see us and where we could look up and up and up.

I didn't know where my mother was, but maybe I could find her. I looked down at the ground below me. It stretched far down but I wasn't afraid to jump. I hung my legs way down and let go with my hands. My feet hit the earth first and gave way to my knees and then I was heaped in the old leaves that smelled good. I waited, then scrambled to my feet and ran across the side lawn aiming for the front corner of the house. No one saw me. I ran and stopped up against the edge of cool brick. I put my cheek against it and peered around to the front yard. The secret trees were there . . . waiting. I could see them tossing and shaking up high. I could hear them too. It was silly to sneak around trees, even secret ones. And I knew it was silly. But I just couldn't walk through them. I slunk behind the shrubbery along the front wall of the house. I knew my mother was inside. Maybe we could both wrap up in her bathrobe and sneak out past these trees. They were rustling hard now. I was almost to the front door. It was heavy and iron and hard to open all by myself. But I got it open and slipped inside to Grandmother's front parlor. Everything was so still all of a sudden. I could hear myself breathing and then the door clinked shut and made me jump. The upstairs stretched pink in front of me. At the top was my mother's pink room. What if I went up all the stairs and got her. Grandmother wouldn't ever have to find us. Then my mother wouldn't have to eat her eggs. And we could go back to Georgia and eat chocolate cupcakes because it was Fred Gilmer's birthday instead of rest period today. I was thinking how fine that would be and I started up the stairs that creaked just a little. But then something made me glance back into the front parlor, and there I saw them. Grandmother in a dark dress and Grandfather with an ice-black suit. They were standing in the doorway whispering and looking at me and shaking their heads. And I just started running.



You might have died just as I saw you that last time,
Huddled quietly in your bathrobe at three in the afternoon
On the right hand side of the front seat, staring dully
From those great grey eyes at nothing at all, like someone's sleepy
child.

Left waiting too long in a supermarket parking lot.
You frightened me to nausea that day, the way
You drew your head in to your frail shoulders so helplessly,
A creature paralyzed at the center of its being.
Remembering that look, I cannot believe them when they say
You will be alright again, though you are back now
Dressed once more like my father at three o'clock in the afternoon
And speaking slowly in your charming voice. I have only to look
To the back of your eyes, beyond the surface alertness
To see the difference: in the deepest part of their greyness
The broken spring gleams in grim and solitary splendour
Its jagged edges illuminated,
irreparable.

Portrait of a Mutual Friend (II)

We can not keep her here,
She is my friend, your lover,
And we can not keep her here.
Caged by the thinnest guilt thread,
Suddenly she will wield
A flash of scissors
Plucked from nowhere,
And cut what holds her to us
With no regret.
Save your pleading looks
For a less cerebral celebrant.
If she is somewhere dancing,
Chandelier music weaving high
Above long-stemmed laughter on a wooden floor,
Remember that her conversations are a pause,
A silence in some other music of her own,
Visible to us only by that quick motion
Behind her eyes, like a flutter of wings
Giving away her transience,
Poised for a moment between us.

only in coach.
Ahide, on the Pen-cent
Rail.
And I'm looking at you 'cause you're looking at
her 'cause she's looking at him 'cause he's got
some nerve looking the way he does.
Short — stop!
Broken — bat stare
First turn left, or right, or center
But pitched home to catch on deck
The curve or pass or whatever she's throwing
his way, but
he's looking at her,
second,
she's looking at me, and I
Caught
Looking.
Read on.



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